NOW
10c

Published Twice a Month

Adventure

May 15th

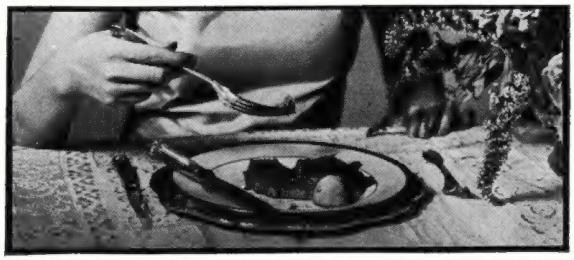
Distinctive Stories By

HAROLD LAMB · ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN · ALLAN V. ELSTON

W. C. TUTTLE · RAYMOND S. SPEARS · PERRY ADAMS

MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON

Do you make these Mistakes in Manners?



The American or "fork-shifting", method of eating.

Don't leave asparagus on your plate! It is meant to be eaten. But read this book and find out the accepted way to eat it. Then you will have no more shivers when you receive an important dinner invitation. You will accept with the conviction that your manners will not betray you.

Many people do not know what time to arrive at a dinner party—they feel it is a little better to arrive late. They butter whole slices of bread at once, and spear rolls with a fork. Even these simple facts disturb them when they have an important engagement.

Others commit the unpardonable crime of tucking their napkins under their chins and wonder why they are not invited again. There are so many little things to remember and watch, it is hard to know always just the correct thing to do.

Delineator Institute has asked an expert on good manners and good taste to gather all these mooted points in a little book to guide those who are not quite sure of themselves. After you study it for a while—five minutes a day for a week is enough—you will not be nonplussed when fresh strawberries, grapes, artichokes, watermelon and other delicious things are served. You will *know* positively how they should be eaten, whether to use a spoon or a fork, what should be cut with a knife, and which knife to use.

Send for this helpful book—GOOD TABLE MANNERS—the fifteen cents you send will be well spent when you find the wealth of information it contains, the assurance you have for the most difficult problems.

Don't wait a moment. Fill in the coupon and send fifteen cents today for this splendid book.

---------- **COUPON** ----------

DELINEATOR INSTITUTE
161 Sixth Avenue
New York City

I want to be self-assured when I am eating with particular people. Please send the booklet GOOD TABLE MANNERS today. I am enclosing 15c.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

(Your inquiry will be held in confidence)

Send the Coupon Now!

Adventure
(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

CONTENTS

1933
VOL. LXXXVI No. 5

for May 15th

A. A. Proctor
EDITOR

In The Tradition . . . . . ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN 2
As out of date as the old clipper ship he commanded was Captain Barnes. But the hurricane seas of the South Atlantic are eternal, and them he knew well.

The Stamped Crime . . . . . ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON 21
No murderer had ever been marked so unmistakably as was the killer of the Hollywood artist. Would a real detective put any faith in such a clue?

The Breaker Of Brynas . . . . MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON 33
"So long as I die in good fame I fear not death." Such was the creed of Thorgrim the Viking, even when fate seemed to decree that his two great vows should go unfulfilled.

Rifled Gold (*Part II*) . . . . . W. C. TUTTLE 38
Continuing a mystery novel of the West, with Hashknife and Sleepy. Murder, a gold mine robbery and a troublesome tenderfoot.

Song In Mahratti . . . . . PERRY ADAMS 53
All India waited breathlessly to see whom the Raj would send after the hill bandit. Because of rumor, the men of his company hoped the honor would not fall to Jurgiss sahib. . .

Alias Blackbeard (*An Article*) . . . JAMES W. BENNETT 64

When A Man Belongs . . . . . RAYMOND S. SPEARS 66
Maybe Old Father of Waters favors the innocent river-tripper. Anyway it took the young shantyboater in hand and showed him how to be self-sufficient.

The Commodore Retires (*An Article*) A. L. SPELLMEYER 71

The Golden Horde (*Part I*) . . HAROLD LAMB 72
Beginning a two-part story of Nial, Crusader's son, who dared to enter even the city of the Great Khan, in search of the emerald of the Caliphs.

The Camp-Fire 87 Ask Adventure 91 Trail Ahead 96

Cover Design by Walter Whitehead *Headings by Neil O'Keeffe*

Published twice a month by The Butterick Publishing Company, Butterick Building, New York, N. Y., U. S. A. Joseph A. Moore, Chairman of the Board; S. R. Latshaw, President; W. C. Evans, Secretary; Fred Lewis, Treasurer; A. A. Proctor, Editor. Entered as Second Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Additional entry at Chicago, Illinois. Yearly subscription, $2.25 in advance. Single copy, Ten Cents. Foreign postage, $2.00 additional. Trade Mark Registered; Copyright, 1933, by The Butterick Publishing Company in the United States and Great Britain.

In the Tradition

By ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

Author of "Tramp Ship Style"

They have gone down like the sunset, who like the sun
Were mighty and high and scornful; their hour is done.
. . . Slowly into the night they pass, each one.
They have gone down like the sunset, sharp on the hill;
A moment against the sky they stood, until
The dark came down and they met it, stoic and still!

—MARY CAROLYN DAVIES

THE three-masted bark *Albacore* was a wreck. The white squall, that rarest of all the winds, had come upon her out of a clear sky and with little warning. Her fore and main topmasts had gone by the board, later her jibboom. Two seamen had been washed overside; the cook had been killed and the galley washed clean. The main cabin skylights were smashed; the wheel had snapped like a twig; most of the bulwarks were gone and the hatches had caved in, some tons of water pouring below. The *Albacore* lay heeled to port, weary as a stricken whale, and the chaotic seas the white squall had left battered her unmercifully. Captain Harry Barnes surveyed his ruined decks and groaned.

"She's not coming up, sir," gasped the young second mate, wiping blood from his forehead and steadying himself against a backstay. "Cargo must have shifted."

Captain Barnes brushed water from his clipped white beard and spat salt over the rail. He was an old man—a very old man—well in his eighties, though still erect and massively built. But the sudden disaster had staggered

him.

"We'll attend to the cargo later," he croaked. "Get that wreckage secured for'ard."

The second mate slid down the companion to the main deck.

"He wants to secure the wreckage," he yelled at the mate whom he found nursing a bruised shin and swearing. The wind was piping thin and high and he had to yell. "What in hell's he going to do with it?"

Captain Barnes showed them when he went forward. The tangle of top-hamper was still secured to the ship by its gear and was banging the hull at every other roll. They cut it free and let it drift away on the end of a stout wire so it served as a sea anchor of sorts to hold the *Albacore* steady. Then they got a rag of canvas on the mizzen, and the *Albacore* headed into the swell.

"We'll have to get a tow-in somewhere and refit," said the second mate. It was his first experience with a white squall and he was somewhat excited. "We can't go on like this. She's full of water and the cargo's listing her. If we get another blow we're gone."

"That's right," agreed the mate, "we'll have to get a tow."

Captain Barnes said nothing, but he went slowly aft to get into dry clothes, leaving the watches at work. He felt a little dazed. They were only four days out of New York, with briquet coal for Iquique, Chile, and this was to be his last voyage. He had clung to the *Albacore* long after she had ceased to make profitable runs. He had been sentimental about the old ship, had dug into his savings to keep her going. But the competition of steam had been too much. For the past six months the *Albacore* had been tied up, seeking a cargo, and his savings were all gone. And he was an old man, a very old man. He felt it now.

All his friends and what relatives he had left had advised him to go into a sailors' home. The *Albacore* was all but worthless; no one wanted a clipper any more. But he had persisted. He had found her a cargo at last; and in Iquique he would sell the old ship. They would buy her for a hulk, if nothing else, and he would get enough out of her to keep him until the end. He had always been independent.

So he had borrowed money to fit her for sea one last time; and after much searching he had gathered a crew of sorts. The voyage should not be long —three months perhaps—and then he could retire in peace. He had never expected disaster to strike him as it had, only four days out. He sank wearily to a chair when he had finished changing and thought for a long time, conning back through the years. The second mate disturbed him, coming down from the poop.

"There's a steamer coming up from the south, sir," he said. "Shall I signal her?"

Captain Barnes looked at him with hard gray eyes and shook his head.

"No," he said, "don't signal her."

He got up and reached for the whisky bottle in its rack over the table. The second mate stared at him.

"But we can't go on like this, sir," he said carefully. "Why, we're sinking now. We've got to refit."

"We'll refit at sea," said Captain Barnes wearily.

He poured himself half a tumbler of whisky and drank it down. The second mate choked.

"But—"

"Get out!"

The second mate went back on deck, very slowly and quietly. Captain Barnes wiped his beard and laughed a little, a harsh sound.

"The boy's right," he muttered grimly. "We ought to tow in and refit. But a tow means salvage, and I can't afford it. We'll have to fight it out ourselves."

Incredible things took place on the decks of the *Albacore* thereafter. Captain Barnes went into long conferences with the carpenter while the old ship lay hove-to and listed on the heavy swell. They fished up the broken topmasts and hoisted them again. They patched the jibboom. They set the galley to rights and ran lines around the sides where the bulwarks were gone. They repaired the wheel and the main cabin skylights, made good the broken hatches, and between times pumped the water out of her and buried the dead. And when that was done they spent

three aching days trimming cargo until the *Albacore* rode on an even keel again.

"I don't see how we did it," said the second mate, half hysterical when it was over.

Captain Barnes had set the course once more, and the ship was beating against a light headwind. The second mate sat on a hatch coaming and ran shaking fingers through his hair. Like all the others he was dirt covered. His eyes were big and red rimmed, and he did not remember ever having slept. All he could remember was a white bearded giant ordering him to do this and that, sometimes thrusting a mug of whisky into his hand, sometimes giving him a push and telling him to go and sit down for awhile. Everything else was a nightmare of pumps moving up and down—saws and hammers going, the rigging of blocks and tackles, swearing at the men, moving sacks of briquet coal and sewing dead men in canvas.

"I don't see how we did it," the second mate kept saying. "It can't be done, anyway—a wreck like we were. A crew of dock laborers instead of A.B's. We ought to have towed in. But he wouldn't. He's mad!"

Captain Barnes loomed over him, haggard and strained, but still upright.

"You'd better turn in," he said dryly. "You're talking too much."

The second mate staggered below and fell into his bunk.

"Hell!" he muttered as he went to sleep. "Hell! And I thought I was a sailor!"

WEEKS later it was Captain Barnes who was talking too much. He was staring into his mirror, his beard whiter, his seamed face thinner, his hard gray eyes burning deep in his face.

"Why is it, why is it?" he was muttering between his teeth. "I've served nearly seventy years. My record's clean. What in heaven's name have I done to deserve this—on my last voyage!"

He had reason to ask. He had performed one herculean feat when the white squall had wrecked the *Albacore*. And after that he had fought headwinds clear down to the Line until he had come to think there were no other winds at all. Then the doldrums had taken the ship and she had rolled fifteen days in a calm. He had been patient. He had always been patient. It had been his vast experience that nothing lasted, not even bad luck; but now he doubted. A furious gale had taken them out of the doldrums, driven them south for three days and then turned and smashed them north and east for two more.

The *Albacore* had fought back, sailing incredibly like the sweet clipper she had been; then another calm had caught her off the Plata whence a pampero had chased her away to the east again. She lost two suits of topsails in squalls after that, and her water turned brackish. She was already one hundred and forty days out from New York, and she should have been in Iquique long since.

Captain Barnes had known other strange passages—two hundred and forty-five days from Sydney to Liverpool once; sixty days from Teneriffe to Antwerp; one hundred and four days from Mauritius to Beira. But this passage passed all experience. Here was the *Albacore*, off the Horn at last, and hove-to. She had been hove-to for seven solid weeks in the teeth of a ceaseless westerly gale with no sign of a let-up. Ice was everywhere—on the deck, in the rigging, on the sails. Gray, smoky seas; squalls of snow and skin-breaking sleet. And the wind always howling and biting through the warmest of garments!

Captain Barnes stared at his reflection in the mirror and cursed. He harked back along the many years and could not recall one thing he had done to deserve this. He held a queer mystical belief in the sea as if it were a real being. He was of the old school, with its legends and myths; had he been an emotional Latin he would have burned tapers and secretly made offerings to the water. He had even known Anglo-Saxon masters who had done that in their time of stress. But he was too sure of himself. Even now, deep down, he was sure of himself.

But he couldn't understand. He had played fair with the sea all his days. He had taken her roughness and her gentleness as part of the trade. If a man knew his work, the sea let him pass. If

a man did not know his work, the sea wiped him out. That was the law. It had always been the law, Captain Barnes thought.

The sea had always played the game before. And what had he done that it should test him so now, an old man on his last voyage, trying to uphold his ancient pride?

CAPTAIN BARNES turned as the mate came into the main cabin, stumbling and reeling with the wild pitching of the deck. Captain Barnes poured a half tumbler of whisky and stared at him.

"There's no sense hanging on," said the mate thickly. He was worn to a shadow himself, a middle aged man, his face long unshaven, with ice crusted in his mustache. "The water's gained an inch since last night. She's badly strained, sir."

Captain Barnes motioned him to the whisky bottle and drank his own liquor at a gulp.

"Half the men are disabled," went on the mate. "You'll have trouble with the rest before long."

"Trouble?" Captain Barnes stiffened and then laughed a little. "What do you want me to do?" he asked harshly. "These gales can't last forever. There's never been a ship hove-to off the Horn longer than eight weeks. We've only been here seven."

"Seven," agreed the mate, "and it's blowing harder than ever."

"Well, what do you want me to do? Put the boats overside and tow her?"

"We're low on grub, sir," the mate announced, a little sullen. "The water's bad so we have to use melted snow. And the ship can't stand any more straining."

"The ship'll stand it," said Captain Barnes grimly. "I ought to know. I've commanded her for thirty years. She's not thrown together. No, it isn't the ship that'll crack."

"But the men, sir?"

"What about the men?"

"They think you ought to try and make Port Stanley in the Falklands. We could lay over there and get straightened up a bit."

Captain Barnes stared at him, too astonished for words. The men—the men thought?

"You—" he choked for a moment—"you want me to put my ship into Port Stanley because the men think I ought to?" he managed to sputter.

The mate was confused.

"Well, sir, they've had a pretty hard time of it."

Captain Barnes's face was gray with anger, and the mate took a step back.

"The men think?" He choked again. "Get the hell out of my sight! What sort of a damned mate are you? Get out!"

The mate backed toward the companion, afraid now. Captain Barnes seemed to fill the main cabin, his massive body trembling with suppressed passion.

"But we can't hang on, sir," said the mate in a last protest.

Captain Barnes stared at him and suddenly grew calm.

"You're right," he said with quiet, grim humor. "We'll turn about and run for Africa."

The mate was turned to stone.

"You mean you'll—you'll go round the world?"

"If these damned westerly gales won't let me into the Pacific one way, I'll use them to take me another. Now get out and don't ever let me hear what the men think again! I'll do all the thinking necessary on this ship!"

The mate stumbled back on deck, awed. Captain Barnes took another drink and swallowed it savagely. Six and forty years as master and it had come to this. The men think! He reached for his oilskins with an oath. He was either master or he wasn't!

"He's mad, mad as a March hare," groaned the mate to the Second on the poop. "Blew up when I said he ought to run into Port Stanley. Do you know what he's going to do now? He's going to run for the Cape of Good Hope. He's going round the world to get to Iquique. We'll be years."

The second mate stared at the great gray combers swinging by in the mist and suddenly laughed.

"Hell!" he said, as he had said once before. "And I thought I was a sailor!"

Captain Barnes loomed from the main cabin scuttle.

"Ready to go about!" he rasped.

The mates stumbled to the main deck, the Second still laughing. For the first time in his young life he began to understand those tales he had heard of the ancient days; tales of iron masters and mad, mad voyages wherein they brought their ships home or drove them under; of times when nothing mattered save the ship and the glory of great passages.

The *Albacore* turned, swept by giant combers each instant; and, once turned, she heeled down and began the long race to the Cape of Good Hope, four thousand miles across the world, because the westerly gales had held her from making a few hundred in the other direction.

IT WAS a mad enough race for the first few days, the *Albacore* running like a racehorse and outstripping the seas. And then the weather began to grow warmer, the wind and sea to abate. The sick men were able to dry their wet mattresses on deck and bask in the sun. Captain Barnes solved the water question by taking advantage of the heavy rain squalls they encountered to refill his tanks; and since the food was low he put all hands on three-quarter rations and then on half rations.

But that was not what caused the forecastle to complain and mutter now. The stores Captain Barnes had purchased in New York had been old cast-offs from many vessels. He had not the means to buy better, and in any case he had never anticipated such a long passage. The men could stand cheap food for a short voyage, he had reasoned, even as he would have to stand it himself.

But now, after all this time, the salt pork had grown green and rancid even in its brine. The salt beef was so hard from prolonged immersion it was possible to saw it in chunks, polish it with oil and use it for carving. The split peas had become infested with insects. The hardtack was so riddled with weevils that when it was broken up pieces moved in every direction on the backs of the creatures. A peculiar sort of beetle permeated the flour, and rats had been at the beans. Such luxuries as potatoes and green stuff had long since gone.

Captain Barnes broke out the remainder of the main cabin stores—canned salmon, canned pork and mutton, canned beef, a few boxes of dried fruits and vegetables. These he joined in the common pool, but even so everything was used in ten days after they had left the Horn and there was nothing but wormy boiled rice and raisins, hardtack and occasionally a few beans. It was inevitable the men should come aft.

"We can't work on this stuff," said the spokesman, holding out a tin kit of rice.

Captain Barnes stood with his hands in his side pockets and surveyed the men, lean, worn, haggard, some of them still covered with boils, a few with traces of scurvy. They were sullen, he knew, resentful of all they had been through. Few of them had been on a windjammer before; a few even had never been to sea before. The hardy race of sailors had gone, died or passed into steam; and he had had to pick up what he could. Adventurous youths with golden ideas of sailing ships; questionable characters wishing to leave the city for awhile; out-of-work stevedores or steamer men.

"We eat the same in the main cabin," he told them, and there was an ugly mutter.

"If you'd gone into Port Stanley we wouldn't have been like this!" said the spokesman passionately.

Captain Barnes did not lose his temper, though a vein in his neck grew large.

"I'm master of this ship," he said calmly. "As such it's my duty to feed you. I'll do my best. Now get for'ard."

"I'll tell you one thing," threatened the man, "this crowd's quitting at Cape Town. We're through, see? You'll kill us all afore ye're done. You're a damned slave driver. Crazy!"

Captain Barnes hit him under the heart and knocked him down the poop companion. The men made a surge forward and from instinct the mate and second mate flanked the master. Captain Barnes stroked his beard, one hand still in his side pocket.

"Get for'ard!" he said quietly. "And take him with you!" He pointed at the groaning spokesman.

They all stared at him, and the burning gray of his eyes held them; that and the breadth of his shoulders, his still erect height, his utter calmness and indifference. And then, muttering, they picked up their companion and retreated forward. The mate licked his lips. He was a weak man.

"Have that mess cleaned up," said the captain, indicating the place where the kit had been spilled.

"I don't see as you can blame them, sir," ventured the mate. "They can't work on that stuff. We ought to edge north into the traffic lanes and flag a ship for some provisions." He stopped talking when he met the captain's gaze.

"Do you happen to know what a mate's duties are?" inquired the captain icily. "Let me tell you. He has only one, and that is to obey orders!"

The second mate chuckled.

NOTHING further happened that day, but on the next the *Albacore* ran into a large shoal of porpoises that played about her bows. A few flights of flying fish were also observed, and Captain Barnes called the carpenter.

"Can you make grains?"

The carpenter looked bewildered.

"Grains, sir?"

"Yes, grains!" the captain said impatiently. "A sort of harpoon."

"I never saw one, sir," said the carpenter, mystified.

Captain Barnes drew him a sketch, and he went away midships to set up his forge. That afternoon Captain Barnes had a stage rigged in the bows of the ship, right under her bowsprit. He had the grains attached to a long line while the second mate and the men watched curiously.

"It's thirty years since I've done it," the captain muttered to himself. And to the second mate, "Hang on to that line and get ready to take a turn."

The porpoises were leaping and playing in the sparkling blue water below. Captain Barnes made a cast, missed and cast again. It took him many casts before he recovered the almost forgotten knowledge of using the grains, and then he struck. There was a wild flurry in the water, and the men hauled on deck a struggling porpoise and killed it with a blow from an ax. Four more the captain caught before the shoal took alarm and darted away, and the captain climbed wearily back to the forecastle head.

"They're good eating," he told the men curtly. "One of them will feed all hands for a day. Send the cook aft."

The cook—a new man appointed since the other cook had died in the white squall—came aft to find Captain Barnes sipping at a glass of whisky and wincing at the stiffness of his arms and back. He was a very old man, and catching porpoises was hard work.

"You've got some lard left?" the captain asked. "Never mind if you haven't. Use the porpoise fat. They won't keep long. Bone them and boil them down in fat. A little seasoning. Then set them in a cask and put about two inches of salt on top. I'll try for more tomorrow. The bones you can use for soup."

The cook went away, slightly dazed.

"Seems like 'e knows everything," he told the men. "Seems like 'e does."

Captain Barnes sent for the second mate.

"I want you to set three lanterns on deck tonight, just inboard from the hull where the bulwarks are gone on the lee side. And have a couple of men stand by."

"Stand by?" asked the mystified mate. "Stand by for what, sir?"

"Flying fish, of course," snapped the captain testily. "Good Lord, don't seamen know anything these days? I told the men I'd feed them and I will."

And that night, lured by the lantern light as moths might be, twenty-seven flying fish, desperately escaping from underwater foes, flew over the lee side of the *Albacore* and landed gasping on her deck. The second mate was awed when they were fried and served the next morning.

"Hell!" he kept saying to himself. "Hell! And I thought I was a sailor!"

Just what Captain Barnes would have thought of next will never be known, for soon after the incident of the flying

fish the *Albacore* sighted a steamer, a black sided, rusty tramp that hoisted the British flag as they approached. Captain Barnes hove to, signaled he wanted to board; and while the men were lowering the longboat he went below and unlocked his cash box.

He hesitated a long time then. He had just one thousand dollars in the box, and that he had obtained as an advance on the freight money—a fund to be used only in the most desperate emergency. He had counted on using it to pay off his crew in Iquique, but they had been out from New York so long now a thousand dollars wouldn't go very far. Still, it would have helped.

Captain Barnes was in debt for outfitting the *Albacore*—he had had to drydock her before he could sail—and he also owed for gear and stores, not to mention other debts. If things had gone well he would have been able to settle everything and still retain enough to amply last him till his death. But now, he did not know. Perhaps the *Albacore* would be too battered for sale as a hulk by the time he got her to port.

He compressed his lips. There was his duty, after all. The men could not be expected to live on weevily biscuits and porpoise for an indefinite period. And in any case there were other things they and the ship had to have that could not be gleaned from the sea itself. He took out five hundred dollars and went on deck with the first touch of weariness in his bearing. The longboat pulled him to the steamer and there he drove a hard bargain.

It hurt his pride. He was Captain Harry Barnes of the clipper *Albacore*, and he understood at last that he had outlived his time. That he should ever have to haggle over sacks of peas and potatoes, bags of coffee, chests of tea, dried fruits, onions, tobacco, some old wire and line, some old canvas, tallow, oil and items from the steamer's slop chest. But he struggled through it, the sweat cold on his forehead and his jaw squared. He winced when the master of the steamer threw in a few sacks of flour, some canned delicacies and two cases of cheap whisky.

"That's on me," the steamer man explained. "I was in sail myself once. I know how it is."

Captain Barnes nodded and went back to his ship. There was little complaint about food for awhile after that. A full stomach can bring forgetfulness of many things. And so the days passed, with headwinds and light airs delaying and baffling the *Albacore* as if in truth the sea was mocking a man who should have died a generation before. One hundred and twenty-seven days from the time they left the Horn they sighted the Cape of Good Hope. Two hundred and sixty-seven days out of New York, and they were still half the world away from Iquique.

THERE was jubilation in the forecastle one night. In twenty-four hours the *Albacore* would be in Cape Town, said the men. They would walk streets again, staggering a little because the sea roll was in their legs. They would smell the scents of a city; they would see greenery and hear laughter. They were wracked and worn from hardships and sick to death of the wide water. They had suffered incredibly. There was not a man who intended to stay with the ship, although they had signed for the voyage. Not a man cared whether he was jailed for desertion, or lost all the wages due him. They were through. Another month or two—perhaps six months—of service under a madman they did not want. Captain Barnes halted in his pacing up and down the poop and called the second mate.

"What's all the noise for'ard, Mister?"

The second mate explained.

"They're celebrating their last night on board, sir."

"Last night?" the captain sharply said.

"Well, they expect to dock in Cape Town tomorrow."

"And desert, I suppose?"

"I suppose so, sir."

Captain Barnes was silent for a moment, his eyes bleak.

"We're not docking," he said at last, very quietly.

The second mate looked at him and then at the dark sea overside.

"Very well, sir," he agreed.

He had ceased to be astonished. He

had come to expect incredible things of this man. He had acquired a strange curiosity to see what was going to happen next, almost a reverence. But the mate felt very differently about it when the second mate told him some time later.

"Not going to dock?" he exclaimed. "We've got to dock. We can't go blundering across the Pacific in this condition. She needs caulking, and there must be three feet of weed on her bottom. And the stores he bought from that steamer are nearly gone."

The second mate shrugged.

"You come with me," exploded the mate. "I've had enough of this!"

He stormed down to the main cabin where Captain Barnes was sitting poring over a book and sipping at a glass of whisky.

"The Second tells me we're not going into the Cape!" he said hotly. "What do you think we are? You'll have a mutiny on your hands if you persist in that. We need everything, and the ship's in no condition for another long traverse. I tell you—" He faltered when Captain Barnes slowly raised his head and stared at him.

"Are you speaking to me?" the old man asked, astonished.

"I am," snapped the mate, getting a hold on himself. "I am, sir! We've been at sea nine solid months. We've done all you can expect us to do. We need everything a ship can need. You've got to go in!"

"I've *got* to do nothing," said the other man evenly, but his hard gray eyes were blazing.

He laid down his book and set his glass aside. The mate choked.

"But the men—"

"Damn the men!" roared Captain Barnes in a gust of terrible fury. "Damn the men! This is my ship. They signed my articles and they'll do as I say."

The mate was speechless for a moment, his face quite white.

"Do you mean to say you are going to Iquique without stopping at any port? It's madness."

"Have you any objections?" demanded the skipper sarcastically, turning to the second mate.

The second mate was smiling, and he shook his head, his eyes bright.

"None, sir."

Captain Barnes stared at him for a long moment, and his lined old face softened as if some echo of his own youth had touched him.

"You would have made a good clipper man," he said simply; and the second mate knew he had received the highest tribute the other had to give.

The mate was trembling with mingled rage and fear.

"We've got to get this settled," he burst out.

Captain Barnes nodded.

"We have," he said coldly. "And now you listen to me. Twenty years ago I'd have put you in irons for talking to me as you have. And twenty years ago I wouldn't have taken the trouble to explain anything. But I'm not so young as I was. And I suppose, as my officers, you're entitled to some sort of an explanation." He paused a moment, struggling with his pride and then he gestured. "Sit down."

Both mates sat down. Captain Barnes pushed the whisky bottle across to them. He waited until they had drunk.

"MY OWN affairs are my own business," he stated bluntly. "But, to be brief, I'm not docking at Cape Town because I can't afford it. This ship is docking at Iquique and nowhere else. If I dock anywhere else, the crew will desert. I know that. You know that. They're not sailors. And if they desert, the *Albacore* will be laid up for weeks, perhaps, finding another crew. I can't afford it. I can't afford to pay out in cash a month's advance to each new man I sign. I can't afford to refit in port. It doesn't matter to you why. The fact remains I can't and I won't. I am going," he ended icily, "to finish this voyage as the old whaling ships finished theirs."

"What's this got to do with the whaling ships?" demanded the mate. He was still trembling, but the whisky had stiffened him.

"The whalers, Mister," went on the old man, "used to make voyages of from two to three years' duration. They

never called at ports for the very same reason I am not calling at Cape Town. The crews would have deserted. So they refitted themselves. They farmed the sea as a hunter farms the woods. They lived on it and off it. They provisioned and watered at lonely islands. They stood on their own feet and, by heaven, we'll do the same!" He struck the table with his clenched fist.

The mate choked back an oath and then got to his feet.

"I won't stand for it!" he shouted. "You're mad. You're living in the 20th Century, not back in the whaling days. You can't do it! There'll be mutiny, and what will you do about that? I'll lead it myself. The men are with me!"

Captain Barnes rose to his full height, his eyes ablaze, and his voice grated as he spoke.

"I've heard enough!" he said.

He turned toward his desk, opened the drawer and took out the logbook. He sat down at the table with pen and ink, cold, austere, dignified. Yes, he had heard enough. He had swallowed his iron pride to expose something of his predicament to his officers, but he was finished with that. He wrote steadily.

"What—what are you doing?" asked the mate at last, his rage ebbing.

Captain Barnes blotted the log and thrust it aside.

"I've disrated you, Mister, to the bosun's place," he said with finality. "I want no first officer who talks of mutiny. The second mate will take your berth. The bosun will take the Second's. That's all. Get your gear together and clear out."

The mate's jaw dropped.

"Disrate me?" he said, stunned.

"It's a little unusual, sir, isn't it?" ventured the second mate.

Captain Barnes looked at him, and the Second subsided. The mate was silent for a moment and then, with a furious oath, he went into his room and packed his gear.

"And now," said Captain Barnes quietly, "you had better get on deck, Mister, until the new second mate relieves you."

The second mate mechanically replaced his peaked cap and went on deck, dazed. Captain Barnes stared bleakly at the bulkhead and thought. He had made up his mind once and for all now. The sea was challenging him and hindering him; men were standing in his path. But he was master and held command; he was going to dock the *Albacore* in Iquique if he had to sail her there alone and if it took him the rest of his life.

Deep down he still felt the sea would in the end play fair with him. It was unthinkable it should not do so. It was testing him, that was all. Perhaps it was angry with him for some reason he could not fathom. Perhaps it wanted to see whether he were still the Harry Barnes of the clipper days. Well, it would see.

The men did not bother him; he could handle the men. Their opposition steeled him, that was all—hardened the iron in him. Neither men nor sea would ever laugh at him. He would make this last voyage memorable if he made it nothing else; and the ship chandlers and the shipwrights neither in Cape Town nor any other port would pick the last few bones that were left him so he would inevitably drift, a broken old man, into some charitable sailors' home. No.

He poured a tumbler of whisky and drank. The good old times. There had been men then, and ships. And the last of them were together, the old clipper *Albacore* and Captain Harry Barnes, still afloat and on their feet—fighting.

THE mutiny broke soon after dawn the next day. The men surged aft, dark faced, sullen and menacing.

"Well, here it is," said the new mate a little unsteadily.

The second mate, the ex-boatswain, hitched up his belt and spat over the rail. He was a middle aged man, gray and phlegmatic. Captain Barnes stood near the forward taffrail, his hands in his side pockets and his white beard thrust out—braced, as it were. He had no fear, not even a tremor. He had faced mutinies before. The former mate was at the head of the men, apprehensive but determined.

"There's no use your talking, sir," he began. "We demand you turn in to Cape Town."

Captain Barnes smiled thinly.

"You've been an officer. You know what this means?"

"I know!" agreed the mate desperately. "I know. We all know, and we don't give a damn! We're not working this ship past the Cape. There's no court in the world would convict us."

"I'm the court," said Captain Barnes.

There was a short silence, and then one of the seamen surged forward, a big man with a massive chest and a pock-marked, brutal face.

"We've 'ad enough!" he shouted. "See? You've hauled us half round th' world already. You wouldn't get a tow when th' white squall disabled us. You wouldn't 'ead into Port Stanley when we 'ad th' ship leaking under us and no decent grub on board. She's leaking now, fer that matter, and th' grub's low again. You'll turn into the Cape, or we'll take over."

"We can't face the Indian and Pacific Oceans as we are," stated the ex-mate. "Listen to reason."

"Get for'ard," said Captain Barnes, his voice icy. "In six days you'll have all the food you want. I give you my word."

"Six days!" shouted the seaman wildly. He thrust the ex-mate aside and started up the companion, drawing his sheath-knife. "Come on!" he roared with a furious oath. "What's the good of arguing with the old fool. Let's get it over with!"

Captain Barnes took his right hand from his pocket and there was the clean spat of a shot. The man swayed on the companion steps, weaved for a moment and then crashed back.

Captain Barnes's voice had not altered in the least.

"Sew him up," he said. "We'll bury him at noon. Bosun, shake out th' t'gan's'ls!"

There was a second of stunned surprise. The men stared at the body sprawled on the main deck, and then stared at Captain Barnes. The ex-mate licked his dry lips.

"That's murder," he stammered.

"That's mutiny," corrected Captain Barnes. "Did you hear my order?"

The ex-mate licked his lips again. The men bunched together and glared at the captain from under tight brows. He stood erect and calm, his hard gray eyes passing slowly from face to face. And they wilted; they backed and turned. The ex-mate drew in a sharp breath.

"Yes," he said, his voice cracking, "the t'gan's'ls, sir!"

He spoke to the men. They picked up the body. Then they all went slowly midships.

"Jump!" roared Captain Barnes.

It was as if an electric shock had run over the crew. They leaped for the rigging, spasmodic as hunted things. Captain Barnes pocketed his gun.

"The course is east a quarter south," he said calmly.

"East a quarter south, sir," said the new mate mechanically.

He passed the order to the helmsman, and the wheel spun. Captain Barnes went below for breakfast and soon after the mate followed suit.

"We're heading for an island I know," said the captain simply, halfway through the meal. "I stopped there once for water in the '80's. Good place to careen and provision. I had the *Travancore* then, and we were blown out of our course when we sighted the place. It's on the charts as Barnes Island. I haven't been back since."

He was quite matter of fact about it, and had apparently already forgotten he had killed a man.

The mate said nothing for awhile. There was nothing he could say. If the captain had observed that he would turn the *Albacore* upside down and take her to Timbuktu the mate would still have said nothing. He would, in fact, have been convinced that that was just what was going to happen. But presently he spoke, awed.

"I suppose you've been at sea a long time, sir?"

Captain Barnes sipped at the glass of whisky he held—he never took tea or coffee—and considered for a time.

"Well over sixty years," he agreed, staring at the mate with his hard gray eyes, almost looking through him. "Yes, well over sixty years. I served on the *Taeping*."

"The *Taeping*, sir?"

The mate had never heard of her. Captain Barnes regarded him with the

peculiar tolerance of the aged, half pitying, half contemptuous.

"You wouldn't remember, of course," he agreed. "She was in the famous race of the tea clippers from the Pagoda Anchorage, Foochow, to the London River. Six of the old clippers. Fast, my boy, fast. In sight of each other all the way, half round the world. I was third mate."

"And who won, sir?"

Captain Barnes wiped his beard.

"The *Taeping*," he said dryly. "By forty-five minutes."

THE mate counted back the years and was appalled. In '66! Captain Barnes had been third mate in '66. Why, he must be close to ninety years old. And taking the *Albacore* to sea at that age. Going through what he had been through; commanding his ship; handling his men; planning now to cross two oceans and to draw his sustenance out of them. At nearly ninety! The mate shook his head.

There rose within him a sense of the iron and splendor of the old time, a splendid vision of his race filling the sea with ships, charting it and taking tribute from it. Such men they must have been in that day, commanding by virtue of working harder, daring more and dying better than any others. Such days; when men brought their ships home or went down with them; when the ships were all and pride stood stiffly in the heart of every man. He shook his head again.

They had nearly finished the meal when the new second mate came stumbling below. His face was white, and he could not speak for several moments.

"Well," said Captain Barnes testily, "what is it?"

The second mate found his voice then.

"Sir—the cargo's on fire!"

Captain Barnes grew rigid. So, after all that had happened, the sea still had more to offer. He was dazed. He stared at the second mate and then at the mate with eyes from which all semblance of life had gone. A fleck of foam appeared on his beard. His great fists clenched and unclenched upon the table. And then an awful fury shook him. Damn the sea! It *was* playing with him. It *was* making game of him. Had he sailed it for over sixty years to let it triumph like this?

He got up, swaying, and the mate half rose to catch him, thinking he was going to fall. But the captain did not fall. Instead, he shook both his gnarled fists at the bulkheads outside of which the water ran chuckling along the hull.

"I'll show you!" he roared. "I'll show you, damn you!"

He breathed hard for a long time, and then seemed to recover. He looked at both his mates, who were watching him with wide eyes, and gave vent to a bitter oath.

"It's the water on the coal," he explained shortly, as if any explanations were needed. "Spontaneous combustion. I was afraid of that. What hold, Mister?"

"Seems in the forehold, sir."

Captain Barnes nodded.

"We'll try and smother it," he grated harshly. "Get the bosun and the watches on deck. Caulk any seams that need it. Slap more tarpaulins over the hatches. Plug all ventilators."

The second mate went away. Captain Barnes looked at the mate.

"You will get the pumps rigged and lay out the hoses, Mister. Swing out and provision the boats. You never know."

He drank half a glass of whisky as the mate went on deck, and then with another surge of fury he flung the empty glass against the bulkhead.

"I'll show you!" he roared. "Damn you!"

And it seemed that the sea laughed back at him as it rippled along the hull.

Captain Barnes went on deck, his face like a mask carved from stone, his clipped beard thrust out stiffly. Fight, fight, fight! What had he done to deserve all this? He could have faced it cheerfully twenty or thirty years back. But now, on his last passage, it made him savage! The voyage was becoming a nightmare, an obsession. He strode to the forward rail of the poop and saw the faint but unmistakable haze rising from the forward hatch, making the foredeck and the rigging waver and bend

as he watched; and there came to him that sick and gripping fear which comes to any sailor when his ship is on fire beneath him.

And the *Albacore,* as if in sympathy, under full sail ran swiftly into the Indian Ocean for an island her master had known in the '80's.

"RIGHT ahead," said Captain Barnes, relief in his tired voice.

He pointed, and the mate lifted the glasses. The old man's eyes were keener even than his, he thought. For into the lenses there leaped, as he looked, the low blur of a small island, misted by the acrid haze that hovered above the clipper's decks.

It was early morning. Midships the pumps were clanking up and down, labored at by a crew of haggard ghosts, who were afraid of the threatening furnace beneath them but were more afraid of the erect old man who stood on the *Albacore's* poop. They had tried for three days to smother the fire. They had fought one mad gale after another in the meantime. They had poured water into the ancient clipper's holds when the smothering had failed; and between pumping water in and fighting the weather they had pumped water out again.

They were almost wraiths of men, swollen eyed, staggering, choking with fumes, unwashed, unshaven, half starved. They would have abandoned the vessel long since had they courage and the chance, and had not the boats been hauled up to the poop, guarded all the time by one of the mates or by Captain Barnes himself. They had lost all hope, almost the desire for life. They might even have quit work in their immense apathy, but Captain Barnes had said, work or die. So they worked. He was a devil.

There was a little animation among the men now. The mad wind had gone down the day before, the sea had moderated since the last gale; and they were reaching up for Barnes Island with a spice scented breeze about their raw faces, a breeze from which even the acrid fumes could not take all the freshness. There was rest ahead, and food; but mostly they needed rest. The clank of the pumps quickened as the land smells came.

The *Albacore* eased up to the island, and at last they opened a cove. It was a little green island with a small hill in the center, heavily timbered and with birds flying about.

They drove with due caution into the cove, Captain Barnes steering and the second mate in the fore crosstrees to con her; two men in the chains with the lead. Not even Captain Barnes could remember depths and reefs after nearly fifty years, and the pilot book was vague. But they got her in and grounded her on shelving coral sand in less than three fathoms of water. The beach ran gently back to the palms, and giant turtles wallowed clumsily away from them.

"No one living here yet," said Captain Barnes, pointing at the turtles. "All right. We'll get an anchor ashore for'ard. The tide may move her if we don't. And then we'll haul her down."

The mate regarded Captain Barnes and said humbly—

"I've heard of it but never seen it done, sir."

Captain Barnes made a belittling gesture. How could the mate have seen it? Ships were careened and fitted in drydock now, in comfort and with many cunning devices. Not like the old times.

"We'll fill her with water to put the fire out," he said shortly. "She's on the bottom and can't sink."

And so they filled her with water, the sea cocks open after four hours of pumping. The *Albacore* settled snugly in the sand, and the acrid mists ceased to rise from her holds and her seams. When it was dark and the stars were big in the velvet sky, Captain Barnes called a halt.

"You can sleep now," he told the men, too weary even to protest if he had asked them to work on. "Sleep until morning, all of you. I'll send some grog for'ard."

The men fell into their bunks, not even waiting for the grog. Captain Barnes slept, and the mates slept. The old clipper lay heeled slightly in the cove, silent and dark while the night drifted away. She was tired too.

THE day broke fair and warm. There were sea fowl above the *Albacore*, curious and inquiring, and fish were leaping in the cove. In the woods there were wild pigeons, wild bustards and guinea fowl. There were wild goats, a few pigs and some chickens.

"The whalers left them," said Captain Barnes when the mate commented upon the matter; and he added with unconscious pride, "after me."

He paused awhile, surveying the ship and the island and brushing his beard.

"The men can have two days' liberty," he said. "They can't desert here. You and me, Mister, will go hunting."

And so they went ashore in the dinghy, the captain, the first mate and the second. For all of one warm subtropical day they wandered through the groves and grasses of the island, shooting the wild game and locating ripe fruits and coconuts, wild yams and taro—just as in the old whaling days the sailors farmed the sea.

There was much to do besides lay in stocks of provisions. When the men had spent their two days of freedom ashore, they trooped back to the problem. They were more cheerful now, even having a certain healthy curiosity; for after just so much danger has been experienced the fear of it is blunted and a certain recklessness comes—a certain tight passion to win against anything. And so, first of all, they pumped the *Albacore* dry.

Then they took the cargo out of her. It was bagged, fortunately, and the sacking had not yet rotted. They transported it ashore, on foot when the tide was out, in boats when the tide was high. And they spread it out on the sand so the hot sun would dry it. And when that was done they hauled the *Albacore* down; that is, they pulled her over on one side and scraped from her hull the three-foot-long weed and the myriad barnacles. They replaced a strained plank here and there and caulked the seams. When that was done they hauled her down on the other side and performed a like service. When caulking ran out they manufactured a substitute from twisted palm tree fiber saturated in tar, for they could not spare rope for oakum.

They whipsawed spare planks, which were stowed away in the holds; and cut spare spars, which they lashed on deck. They set up the rigging, splicing and resplicing, for they were short of line. They set new topmasts and a jibboom in place because the others, weakened, were not any too trustworthy. Then they scraped and oiled the masts and spars and repaired all the sails.

They salted down goat meat and pig meat. They made pemmican of bustard and wild pigeon and laid down dozens of wild chickens in salt too. They gathered yams and taro and set them in the lazaret where it was dry. They refilled their water tanks from a clear spring that bubbled down through the palms. They caught fish and salted them or dried them. They caught turtles and did the same, though some they preserved alive. Captain Barnes seemed possessed of inexhaustible means of preserving and preparing foods, and the cook learned many things.

When all this was ready they put the briquet coal back into the holds and kedged the *Albacore* to deep water again—a task that would have taken a long time except that they were fortunate in getting a spring tide which almost lifted the clipper free without aid. And then they towed her clear of the cove and to sea again. And they hoisted her sails and cheered as she heeled to the landward breeze.

"The course is east-southeast," said Captain Barnes. "Let her run!"

And so she plowed into the Indian Ocean again to make the coast of Tasmania.

They had been at Barnes Island sixty-five days; and it had taken them over two weeks to reach it from their landfall at the Cape, which meant they had been out of New York just three hundred and forty-seven days—nearly a year at sea—with Iquique still halfway around the world.

MUCH of the tension had gone from the ship. Captain Barnes had gained back weight he had lost, and most of the strain and fever had gone from his eyes. He was almost jubilant. He

felt he was winning. He had shown the sea what he could do. Here he was on his way again, his men moderately contented for awhile, his ship sound beneath him. And it seemed indeed as if the sea had relented, for the wind held fair for a week, and they logged a steady ten and eleven knots clear away until they were off the southwestern tip of Australia.

They sighted a Portuguese steamer there, and Captain Barnes hove-to long enough to take two hundred dollars from his store of money and purchase more tobacco, sugar, coffee, pepper, rum and some odds and ends of apparel. Thereafter they sighted no more ships and, the wind slowly failing, they drifted south of the Great Australian Bight on a sea of opal flecked with green under a diamond hard sky.

As in the doldrums of the Line, they wallowed in a heavy calm. Everything moved and creaked. The sails emptied and filled with cannon-like reports. The yards swung, the blocks jarred and complained. It was almost impossible to keep a footing on the hot, dry decks; the sun smote heavily down by day and the hot air pressed heavily down by night. After ten days the deadly monotony began to fret the nerves and there were fights forward. One seaman was killed in a knife battle and two others were injured. Had not Captain Barnes and the mates waded into the mêlée there would have been other casualties.

The captain's brows began to knit again. He spent most of his time walking the poop and whistling for a wind. He spent time, too, gazing darkly at the smiling opal sea and wondering. Was it still playing with him? After all he had been through, all he had done, it should not hinder him any further. He talked to it when he was alone, muttered in his beard.

"You're not playing fair," he would say, half pleading. "Look here, you've had your fun. Give me a wind—any sort of wind. You've never done anything like this to a ship before."

Perhaps the sea heard; but if it did it only mocked him. For there came a wind indeed, a full gale driving from the northeast that turned to a hurricane after a dozen hours. It smote the *Albacore* and drove her to the south, far down so she did not even make a landfall of Tasmania and caught only a squall misted glimpse of Stewart Island off the tip of New Zealand.

She was compelled to run clear down to the fiftieth parallel before she could wear and begin a long drive on the port tack and up into the Pacific Ocean. She lost her royals and topsails in a series of furious and sudden squalls and, driven by a new gale, she lost her foremast far to the east of Chatham Island. It seemed that all the elements sought to overwhelm the old clipper.

It was almost Horn weather over again—cold rains, the ceaseless drive of the wind, ugly gray-green seas, fog and a sky seldom seen behind a curtain of smoky scud. The men grew lean and worn, bitter and ugly. Some were sick. Short handed as the *Albacore* already was, sickness seriously handicapped her; and not only the mates but Captain Barnes himself had perforce to go down on the main deck and work when the need arose.

The weather abated at last—though they were well up near the tropics before it did—and for a week they had light, baffling airs and a long greasy swell for which they were thankful. During this period they were able to rig a jury foremast. In the hurricanes the water tanks had started leaking and the sea had seeped in so the water was all but undrinkable. That added to their miseries, for they needed much water because of the large amount of salted food they had to consume.

Captain Barnes during these latter days seemed to have reached the verge of madness. He gave vent to furious and unreasoning rages wherein, a normally clean mouthed man, he ripped out strings of oaths that purpled the air. He raged at the men, at the ship, at the sea! He never seemed to sleep. He was prowling about at all hours. He grew thin and lean again; his eyes burned; his thin white hair began to drop out and he fast grew bald. His officers watched him, awe-struck, and even the loyal young mate began to have doubts as to his sanity.

"It's never happened before!" he

would blare at them, when they were eating or he was checking up on the day's run. "Never! Not a ship in a thousand ever had such luck!"

And then he would curse the sea. They could not understand why he should do that, and he never troubled to explain. He cursed it wave by wave, drop by drop. He recalled to it memories of other ships and other storms and other passages, just as if it were a personal being and was listening. He believed it could hear, at any rate.

There might have been another mutiny, and there were times when even the mates felt inclined to lead it and take over. But he dominated them too much even yet. He towered over them, erect and strong and on fire. The iron of his will wilted them. He was obsessed with the idea of reaching Iquique, of defeating the sea that mocked him. And not one of them had the courage to stand up to him.

THE *Albacore* fought on against headwinds and half gales. In one period of calm she drifted two hundred miles to the west in a strong current, and when the wind came again she lifted after a few hours the rocky shores of Pitcairn Island, that lonely outpost of the South Pacific, settled generations before by the mutineers of the *Bounty*. Few ships ever sighted that island; and when one chanced to it was an event.

Canoes came out to the old clipper. Bronzed, half-naked men clambered up her sides, beaming and laughing. They brought gifts—fresh fruits and vegetables, live pigs, chickens, fish. They needed nails, a few tools, any old newspapers, and various other things. Newspapers! Captain Barnes laughed at them. The world might have come to an end for all he knew, as regarded the newspapers. He hadn't seen one since leaving New York. But he gave them what else they needed, and they brought him further provisions, for which he was grateful, since there were traces of scurvy in the crew again.

More important, four of the islanders agreed to help him take the ship to Iquique; and since they were all seamen this counted more than a little.

The *Albacore* wore away from Pitcairn Island—or rather, was blown away by a strong wind from the west, a fair wind for Iquique at first; but after twelve hours it changed and, blowing half a hurricane, hammered the *Albacore* north and west across a gray, mist-hung sea. Even the young mate began to get frightened.

"She's a Jonah," he said one watch to the second mate. "It's no use talking. We'll never reach Iquique."

The second mate rubbed his unshaven jaw and agreed. What else were they to think now? It seemed there was some giant hand holding them back from port. Iquique was to the east and the wind persisted in driving them west, just as it had driven them east when they had tried to round the Horn so long before.

Captain Barnes had subsided from his furious rages. He had settled into a grim, hard silence that was more terrifying than his mad rages had been. His jaw was always outthrust. His eyes were sunken and red rimmed. He walked with a peculiar stiffness of motion that held within it a certain desperate arrogance. He was going to reach Iquique if he reached it alone and in one of his whaleboats.

If he had been determined and obstinate before, he was fanatical now. But even his fanaticism crumbled when, before dawn one day, running before an easy wind toward the east after the hurricane had dropped, the *Albacore* piled up on a coral and sand shoal.

It was sudden, unexpected and utterly irrational. They were south of the Paumotus at the time, wearing away toward the South American coast, and the charts gave them clear sea ahead. It was dark, of course, and the moon had set while the stars were beginning to pale in the sky. The mate had the poop. The *Albacore* was under a heavy press of sail, and Captain Barnes had gone below for a few hours' sleep, content for the time being that they were at least going in the direction he wished to go.

The mate saw nothing ahead. He was not expecting to see anything. He was leaning on the rail, staring at the phosphorescence in the water as the ship

slid along and thinking with some relief that the worst of their troubles must be over.

Now surely they were all right. A clear run to Iquique, the wind fair, the glass high and the sea as smooth as black velvet.

And then it had happened. He had heard vaguely a faint *hush-hush* as of surf; but the noise of the wind in the sails had persuaded him he was dreaming. He glanced ahead, and it seemed there was a ruffle on the water; but it looked more like a school of fish than a shoal. Besides, the charts said there was no shoal. And so the *Albacore* struck, ran on, plowed half her length into softness and stopped with a jerk.

The shock took all three topmasts, and for half a minute there was a rending and a crashing as the spars and rigging came down with a furious lashing of canvas. The ship heeled to port. Every pot and pan in the galley fell with a clang. Every man who was on deck was knocked off his feet. And then for awhile there was silence.

THE mate picked himself up, dazed and half buried in gear. He had not the slightest idea what had happened. He shouted forward, and a confused shouting came back. Captain Barnes staggered on deck, his face ghastly. He could not speak. He stared along the ruin of his decks, overside at the calm velvet sea.

"She's aground, sir," said the mate in a small voice. He was frightened at the look in the captain's eyes. "The chart said—"

He stopped. Captain Barnes had gone slowly down on the main deck to look over the bows, his face ghastly, his mouth lax and half open. He spoke to no one. He was like a man in a dream —a sleep walker, if you like. A dead man who had not yet fallen and closed his eyes. He looked at the shoal, at the sky, at the sea, at the decks of the *Albacore* and at the sea again.

"All right," he said in a queer, strained voice, and to no one in particular. "All right."

He felt unutterably tired. He felt drained. He was nearly ninety years old, but he had been strong when he left New York. He was a shell now. It had been too much. The sea had not played fair. He had done his best. He knew he had done his best. His record was clean; he had made no mistakes. He had trusted the sea as only the old-time sailors could. He had believed in it. Even in the greatness of his former stress he had believed in it in his heart. It had been his god—such god as he had—and it had betrayed him. He was finished.

He went back aft, the age-lag in his step now, and dropped heavily to the main cabin skylight, burying his tired white head in his hands. The mate came to report.

"She's not making much water below, sir. Seems to have grounded in two fathoms, sand and coral. But there's deep water aft."

"How deep?"

"I found no bottom with the hand lead, sir."

"She'll break her back then," said Captain Barnes dully. "Never mind."

"But we might—"

"Never mind," the captain said again, waving him away.

The men had gathered midships. The second mate brought lanterns on the poop. No one dared speak to Captain Barnes. He was bowed and silent, but in the end he raised his head and they were shocked at the change in his face. He got up, and they saw that his shoulders were bent. He was no longer erect. There was a drag to his step and his eyes were blank.

"Where's the chart?" he said.

The mate brought the chart.

"You can make the Paumotus in the boats," said the captain after awhile, speaking mechanically. "Provision them and swing them out."

The mate stared at him, and there was a queer pain about his heart.

"Aren't you going to try and get her off, sir?" he said. "She seems uninjured."

"You'll take the longboat," said Captain Barnes bleakly. "The second mate can take the other. Bear northwest and you can't miss the islands."

"But, sir—"

"I'm staying here."

The mate bit his lip.

"We can kedge her off!" he burst out passionately.

Captain Barnes laughed without mirth.

"You can't drop a kedge anchor where there's no bottom."

"We haven't sounded very deep yet, sir."

The other man gestured.

"I know what I'm talking about. She put us here and she'll keep us here. Take a deep sounding, if you like. I know."

"She?"

"The sea!"

There was a long silence. The mate stood motionless. Then he recollected himself and went away to where the men muttered midships.

"I think his mind's gone at last," he told the second mate. "But get the dinghy launched. I want to find something out."

They launched the dinghy, and the mate took soundings. The *Albacore* was buried fast three parts of the way on the shoal, which dropped off abruptly to deep water. At a hundred fathoms the mate still found no bottom.

"How did he know?" he inquired, mystified, of the dawn that was flaming along the east. "How did he know we'd find no bottom at all? We can't kedge her off with that."

He went back to the ship. Captain Barnes was sitting on the main cabin skylight still, and he did not ask what the mate had found. He knew. He was very tired and thought he would go to his bunk to lie down, sleep, and wait. The first blow would hammer the *Albacore* to pieces. It was queer, he thought, to end like this—the weather peaceful and calm, the wind fair for Iquique, his ship still sound of hull beneath, but immovably wedged upon an unknown shoal. Not a chance to shift her without the aid of a tug, and where would a tug be in the middle of the South Pacific?

He stared at the sea. Yes, it had finally beaten him. It had had its fun with an old man who had served it for over sixty years. He hoped it was satisfied. He had never dreamed it would betray him like this, but it had. He was too weary, too apathetic now even to curse. He merely looked and dropped his head again. There was just one thing left. He would see things out to the end. That was the tradition: If you couldn't bring your ship home, you went down with her.

He got up from the skylight at last. He saw the mates were busy with the boats. They should have no trouble in reaching the islands and safety. He watched them for awhile and then went below to the main cabin and lay down on his bunk. Presently he dozed, relaxing. The fight was over. He dreamed he was back on the old *Taeping* when the tea clippers raced from Foochow—a young third mate learning the trade. He dreamed of many things; but after awhile he ceased to dream and slept deeply. He was very old and very tired.

THE mate roused him, shaking him excitedly and shouting at him. Captain Barnes opened his eyes, glanced mechanically at the clock screwed to the bulkhead above his bunk and saw he had been below only twenty-odd minutes.

"What is it?" he said without curiosity.

"Come on deck, sir!" insisted the excited mate. "There's a chance she'll lift off."

"Chance she'll lift off? Don't be a fool!"

He would have closed his eyes once more, but the mate all but dragged him out of the bunk and urged him up on the poop.

"If she stands the first blow she'll lift," the mate said, choking. "See there, sir! See there!"

Captain Barnes shaded his eyes with his hand and glanced ahead. And there, a dark line on the horizon, was coming toward them a wall of water. It would strike the *Albacore* so she would meet it head-on; it was the only thing under earth or heaven, save a powerful tug, that would rip her from the shoal—a tidal wave.

Captain Barnes put out a hand and steadied himself against a backstay. The old instinct of command rose in him to drown his apathy.

"You'd better make things fast," he

said weakly. "Clear that mess off the deck."

The mate raced away, shouting to the men. The wall of water came on fast. An uneasiness seemed to permeate the sea around the *Albacore*. Little wavelets began to appear, lapping at her. Then the first of the advance swells surged by her and she shuddered. The swells grew bigger—long smooth things without foam, irresistible. The day was full now, the sun above the horizon. Light glittered along the wall of water as it came up. The *Albacore* stirred, jarred several times and came to an even keel. And then, as the great main wave towered almost over the jibboom, she sucked free, lifted and was swept back.

It was an even break then as to whether she would survive. She lifted, lifted, lifted—almost cleared the crest of the wave, but not quite. Six feet of solid water topped the forecastle head and slicked aft. No man could stand in its path, and no man tried to. The crew dived into the forecastle. Captain Barnes and the mates fell down into the main cabin. The *Albacore* was submerged for perhaps half a minute, buried in green and white. The main cabin was filled; the forecastle was filled. Every man held his breath and struggled and cursed; a few prayed.

And then it was over. They felt the old ship lift. They heard the roar of water streaming away from her. They saw daylight once more. They fought, frantic for air, up to the deck above and saw that the *Albacore* was pitching madly in the chaotic, jumbled sea which followed the wake of the tidal wave. Her decks were swept clean; even the galley had gone. All the boats and broken spars were wiped away and all other movables had been swallowed in the water. But the ship floated, and her hatches had held beneath the strain.

"Cleared!" gasped the mate.

Captain Barnes brushed his wet beard and breathed hard, scarcely comprehending at first. And then it came to him, like a dawning light, slowly but fully. He understood many things, as if the sea had taken him at last into her own secret communion. Yes, they had cleared, and were off the shoal. He looked at the sea, his eyes wide, and a new brightness filled the emptiness within him. He nodded, and beneath his beard a faint smile quivered.

"All right!" he said in a strangled voice. "All right!"

It was his apology. He had cursed the sea, had lost even his faith. But she hadn't betrayed him—not altogether. She had given him back his ship when it seemed he must inevitably lose her. She wanted him to go on fighting. She had jested with him, but the jest was done. Strangely, he knew that. He was sure. It had only been a last tussle. The sea had even done him honor, testing him so. They were old friends and old foes. She would have done no such honor to one of the newer seamen. No, only to him—Captain Harry Barnes, who had seen the tea clippers race from Foochow.

He straightened his shoulders. He would, he knew, never be the same again. Something had gone out of him when the *Albacore* had struck and he thought the end had come. He knew that he should have died with his generation, just as the *Albacore* should have died. The world was too much for both of them now. But still he straightened his shoulders. He had kept the faith, and the sea had understood. There was that always between them.

The mates stared at him when he spoke. He was like that Captain Barnes who had left New York so long before, confident and erect. He was going to reach Iquique. Whatever else happened and however he felt, that was his duty. There was no time to rest. The *Albacore* needed him. He had men to command still. And below decks there were all those tons of briquet coal awaiting delivery. He stood braced against the forward poop taffrail, his white beard jutting stiffly and harsh orders snapping from his lips. In the tradition.

THERE was a sensation in Iquique harbor when the *Albacore* came into the roads. News reporters and officials swarmed on board. Iquique had seen many strange sights and had known many strange ships, but never one like the *Albacore*.

She was a wreck. Her rigging was a fantastic maze of frayed wire and rope.

spliced and respliced. Her sails were a network of patches, and she was jury-rigged on all three masts. There was no galley. A cookstove stood amidships beneath an awning, and that was all. There was no sign of the main cabin scuttle or of the skylights; but ragged holes in the deck showed where they had been. She needed paint so badly the raw wood showed through in great areas along her hull. Her very deck planking was cracked and warped, and she seemed to be a little sway-backed.

Here and there the hull had been patched with layers of canvas or sheets of hammered tin nailed on. Her wheel was a crazy hand-made thing; the only compass she possessed was a small pocket affair which had been fastened to the top of a cracker box. It came out later that she had been without chronometer time for months, and most of her charts had been ruined by water. In the last stages of her journey she had been navigated by guess and by God.

The crew of the ship was not much better off than the ship herself. They were all almost naked and almost black with the sun and wind. They had long hair and long, tangled beards. They had big, red rimmed eyes, and their bodies were covered with the wales of old wounds and with new raw sores and boils. These creatures lined the ship's side—her bulwarks and rails were all gone—and gibbered at the sight of strangers and at the white houses ashore. Filthy they were and foul smelling.

"You've been overdue more than a year," said the consul when he found Captain Barnes.

The old man was standing on the poop, supporting himself against a backstay, his white beard tangled to his waist and the bones of his face showing almost bare. A tug was blowing smoke across the ruined decks, and the mate was forward preparing to drop the anchor. The consul had boarded from the official launch and he was excited.

"Yes," croaked Captain Barnes without interest, "five hundred and twenty-six days out of New York. We had a little trouble."

"A little trouble?" echoed the consul. He felt the utter inadequacy of words.

Captain Barnes shouted forward and the mate lifted an arm in response. The anchor cable roared down through the water, checked and roared again. The *Albacore* came to a slow stop and swung to the tide, calm upon the calmness of the harbor. The mate came aft and thrust aside the consul.

"Thirty-five fathoms of cable out, sir," he said. "Ought to be enough."

Captain Barnes looked at him and took a fresh grip on the backstay.

"Enough? Aye, that's enough." He puckered his hard gray eyes and stared at Iquique. "Quite enough," he added.

He paused for a time, and they watched him, the consul with curiosity, the mate as if waiting for something. Captain Barnes gave a faint smile.

"We brought her in," he said, and they could hardly hear him. "Brought her in. Just as we always did—" He stopped and closed his eyes and his head fell forward on his chest.

"Sir!" said the mate gently.

There was no answer. After a moment the mate stepped forward and touched the captain, but he did not move. It was the consul who spoke, nervous.

"I think he's pretty sick," he ventured.

The mate took off his battered, peaked cap and looked at him queerly.

"He's dead," he said slowly. "He's been dead for weeks, but couldn't let go until we'd anchored. Don't you see?"

"Dead?" echoed the consul, staring at the upright old man who clung to the backstay.

The mate—and he was no longer young—felt a mist come before his eyes and turned away to hide it. He would like to die like that—on his feet, bringing his ship home. In the tradition.

"Hell!" he said thickly. "Hell! And I thought I was a sailor!"

The Stamped CRIME

By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

Author of "Murder in Drawing Room B"

I FELT a premonition of impending evil before that poker session was half over. It was an impression, intangible yet persistent, that some sinister circumstance threatened our company.

Tangibly the only things oppressively apparent were Foy's temper—that of a man who all his life had been a poor loser; and the gaiety of Rich, whose effort to make it appear that he was a good loser was extravagantly overdone. The stony face of Paul Seixas expressed no mood at all.

Often we played there at the studio of Phil Dixon, the artist. The place was sequestered, being in that picturesque though forlorn subdivision situated atop the oak ridge which is the north wall of Hollywood. Neighbors at that time were few, the nearest tenanted house being my own, some five hundred yards east along the ridge.

Our game broke up early, because brisk luck favored Dixon. He won all the money in the crowd, a trifle over sixteen thousand dollars. It was Seixas, I recall, who long before had insisted that we always play for cash. Checks were barred except when a loser called a final pot without sufficient funds. Such was my own dilemma that night as the game broke up; I had to give Dixon a check for fifteen dollars.

"What I need is a basket," he said. The table drawer in front of him was crammed untidily with his winnings.

Homer Foy arose unsteadily. His eyes were bloodshot, and he smiled bitterly. Then he started to pour himself a drink, only to find that his own last dram had finished the bottle.

"I'll fetch another," offered Dixon; he descended immediately to a wine cellar which he maintained directly under the

room.

Foy stood waiting, his face flushed. He was a fallen star. A tall, athletic fellow once featured in the rough-and-tumble movies, he was outmoded and now without a job. My guess was that the game had taken his last dollar.

Yet I doubted if he were any more desperately stripped than was Seixas; for Paul Seixas was the ex-president of Westcoast Mutual Loan, now defunct, whose crash was steeped in scandal. Seixas himself had barely escaped indictment. He was a man of forty-eight, with wavy, prematurely gray hair and pale blue eyes. He was stalwart, with a chest deeper than Foy's. His features were blunt, but his close-cropped white mustache gave him an air of paternal dignity.

Dixon returned from the cellar. Foy snatched the bottle from Dixon's hand and poured himself a drink. Seixas waved the liquor aside.

Only Rich drank with Foy. Rich was a backslapper, always overdoing good fellowship. A Hollywood boulevardier, sometimes flush, sometimes broke, he had consistently cultivated worthwhile connections. I knew nothing of his background except that he had arrived in town years before as the pianist in an orchestra.

While the two drank I saw the eyes of Seixas fixed upon the partly opened table drawer. As his gaze lingered on the litter of cash there his face seemed to harden. Then he said abruptly—

"Good night, Dix."

Taking his hat and cane, he left the house. The rest of us followed. Three cars were parked in front. Rich, Seixas and Foy each embarked in a car and drove down the hill. In five minutes the winding grade would take them down into Beachwood Gulch, only ten minutes from the heart of Hollywood.

I, Grant Coburn, said good night to Dixon and then strolled east along the ridge toward my own bungalow. A thousand feet below me, stretching twenty miles to the sea, lay a huge checkerboard of lighted streets. Close by on the rim of the ridge stood a flamboyant electric sign spelling Hollywoodland, a nocturnal landmark visible from remote corners of Los Angeles.

It was eleven o'clock when I reached home. Taking a book to the hearth chair, I tried to read myself into drowsiness. I had read perhaps four chapters when, fumbling in my vest pocket for a match, I fished out a key. Immediately I recognized it as the ignition key of Phil Dixon's coupé. I had borrowed his car that afternoon. I had returned the car but had thoughtlessly dropped the key into my vest pocket.

"That means," I thought aloud, "that he'll be waking me up at some unholy hour."

It was my habit to sleep late, but it was otherwise with Dixon. Besides, he'd mentioned his intention of driving early in the morning to paint a surf scene at Santa Monica.

Looking from my west window, I saw that his studio window was still lighted. I decided to walk over and deliver the key.

At that instant the ridge went darker. It was because the lights of the huge Hollywoodland sign were switched off. I knew that they were always switched off exactly at midnight. Perhaps it was because the ridge was now darker that the odd prescience of impending evil recurred to me. At any rate, I dropped an automatic pistol into my coat pocket. Thus armed, I walked the five hundred yards to Dixon's.

I FOUND the shades drawn, the front ones illumined by a light burning in the studio. Dixon and I, for a long time neighbors and fast friends, habitually entered each other's house without knocking. So I opened the door and stepped inside, expecting to find him reading by the fireside.

For a moment I did not see him at all.

"Here's your infernal key, Dix," I yelled, closing the door behind me.

Then I saw him. He was stretched at full length on the floor. Almost instantly I knew that he was dead. His collar was torn, and there were purple bruises at his throat.

"Dix!" I gasped, staring down at him.

Finally I stooped and touched his flesh. He was, I made sure, quite dead. I felt dizzy. The room spun, but finally I began to distinguish further details

of disorder. The table was still littered with cards and chips. But the drawer which an hour ago had stored sixteen thousand dollars was now pulled entirely out and lay on the floor, empty.

It was a full minute before I realized that guilt surely must lie with one man of three. A desperate loser must have returned to recoup by stealth. Foy, Seixas or Rich?

One of them must have been looting the money drawer when surprised by Dixon. Then a scuffle, ending in the murder. Who but one of us four would have known the money was here?

It was imperative that I telephone the police at once. Dixon had no phone at his studio; he had maintained that no artist at work should risk being disturbed. Therefore, to telephone, I had to run to my own bungalow.

As I backed toward the exit I noted that the drawers of a cabinet were pulled out, the contents strewn in disarray. The same was true of desk drawers. The velvet mattress of a couch was wrong side up and askew.

That told me the marauder had been forced to search extensively for the loot. No doubt he had gone first to the drawer of the poker table. But Dixon, once his guests had departed, would hardly have left sixteen thousand dollars in such a vulnerable place. Surely he would have put it in a safer place until banking hours.

My next thought was that perhaps the criminal had not found the money at all. Possibly, during an unsuccessful search for it, my own approach had frightened him from the house. Or maybe he was still here! Maybe he now stood behind a door or curtain, with a gun on me, ready to drop me as I stood posed under the studio light.

I took two backward steps toward the exit. Then I recalled my own gun and drew it. Perhaps, before leaving, I had better search the house; otherwise the murderer, if still there, would easily escape while I went to telephone.

At least, I decided, it was my duty to look over this room for all clews. So I glanced about me. I saw nothing new. But suddenly I heard a sound. I stiffened. It was a faint, scraping sound, and it caused my nerves to jump so violently that I almost pulled the trigger of my gun.

However, I stood quite still, listening intently. The sound was not repeated. Perhaps I had only imagined it. Yet I had the feeling of a living presence near me, within the house.

My eyes scanned every inch of the walls and floor. Above were rafters, and above these a studio skylight. The walls were rustic redwood with the bark turned in. The floor, conforming with Dixon's idea of a mountaintop studio, was of rough-hewn pine boards. Except for a few small Indian rugs, the floor was bare.

Suddenly I saw on the floor a small yellow circle about the size of a dollar; at first I mistook it for a yellow poker chip. Then I realized that it was merely a knothole in the floor. What I now saw was a circle of mellow light gleaming through it. That startled me, for it meant that the electric light was turned on in the wine cellar. Had the sound come from there? Was the murderer lurking there, waiting for me to withdraw? Or had Dixon himself, on his errand for that last bottle, left the cellar light burning?

I had no more than asked myself these questions when they were answered, definitely, by the disappearance of the yellow circle on the floor. While I gazed at it, that illuminated disk disappeared.

Which proved beyond any doubt that some human hand had just switched off the basement light!

FROM that instant my conviction never faltered as to the guilt of Foy, Seixas or Rich.

Each of them knew about the wine cellar. After searching the studio in vain, it would be natural for any one of that trio to suspect that Dixon had placed his winnings in the cellar for safekeeping overnight. No doubt the guilty man had descended to search the cellar and was now trapped there by my own intrusion.

Now, I thought grimly, the killer was delivered to me. I resolved to capture him at once and unassisted.

Had I suspected a man of mystery, a strange burglar or professional crook, I

would have feared to encounter him in the cellar. But familiarity bred contempt—I was sure he was Foy, Seixas or Rich. I was armed. Probably the murderer had no gun, or he would have used it on Dixon.

There was a flashlight on Dixon's desk. I took it and went to the door at the head of the cellar steps. The key was in the lock, and for a moment I considered turning it, merely locking the marauder downstairs while I raced to my telephone. I decided against that plan, for while I was away he might batter down the door.

I opened the door. Only the inky darkness of a vestibule confronted me. I groped for the steps. I recalled a turn in the stairway about halfway down. I decided not to flash my light until I was at the turn, in a position to command the area below. Five steps downward, I reached the bend. Then I yelled:

"I know you're there. Stand still."

My hope was for some vocal response. If the man were Foy, Seixas or Rich, I would know the voice. In that way, even if he escaped me, I could later name him to the police. But no answer came from the blackness of the basement.

I rounded the bend and took another step downward. For a fleeting moment, then, boldness forsook me. That silent darkness was ominous. Then the grip of the pistol reassured me. I flashed on the light, sweeping its rays over the wine cellar, which was about fourteen feet square. Liquor cabinets lined two walls of it, while at the far end there was a row of barrels.

I saw neither Foy, Seixas, nor Rich; I saw no one at all. Yet some one there must be; else who had switched off the light a moment ago? The fellow must, I thought, be crouching behind that row of barrels. Keeping the flashlight on, I descended to the cellar floor. All the while my eyes and pistol were trained alertly on the barrels.

Then, just as I reached the cellar floor, a bottle whacked the back of my head. I know now that the man must have been crouching under the steps. My back was toward him when I completed the descent; thus he simply stepped out and struck me down.

I was knocked forward, dropping both flash and gun. The light went out. For a minute I sprawled there, reeking with liquor, with only a fraction of my senses. I retained enough consciousness, however, to be groggily aware that the assailant was groping for my pistol. Then I heard him dash up the steps to the room above. I heard the door at the head of the steps slam shut; then a key turned in the lock.

My head began to clear. I put a hand to the back of it and felt blood from a cut. A moment later I arose unsteadily and groped for the light globe. I found the socket, but the globe was gone. I realized that the man had unscrewed it, taking it with him.

I struck a match, making sure that he had also taken the pistol. The match flickered out. I stood forlornly in the dark. Having locked me in the cellar, the murderer would naturally escape.

But sounds above told me that, so far, he was not taking advantage of his opportunity for flight. His footsteps were crossing and recrossing the room above. I heard him move furniture and violently jerk open drawers and closet doors.

Obviously he was resuming his hunt for the sixteen thousand dollars. Doubtless he thought I was either dead or stunned; in any case I was disarmed and locked in, so I could give him no trouble. Plainly, too, he had failed to find the money in the cellar. He was still doggedly after it.

Looking upward, again I saw a small circle of light. It shone on the ceiling of the cellar, directly over my head. I knew it came from the studio and was shining through that same knothole in the floor.

Could I spy through the hole? I groped for a barrel, found one and placed it under the knothole. Making no sound, I clambered to the top of it. Standing there, my head was only a few inches below the basement ceiling. I twisted my neck, awkwardly trying to peer upward through the knothole.

My view was limited to a vertical column of space just above the hole. I waited breathlessly, hoping the man might take a position directly over me, so that I could discern some detail of

his person. Even the pattern of a trousers leg might tip me off to his identity.

The man was still searching persistently. Again and again he crossed the studio floor. Once he came quite near the hole, but not near enough for me to glimpse him.

For fear he would hear me, I hardly dared to breathe. In this position I was peculiarly at his mercy; for if he thrust the muzzle of the pistol through the hole he would literally poke it in my eye.

Evidently he did not suspect the knothole, for he went on searching. Again he came near the hole, but not near enough. Then he came *too* near it. I heard him tread squarely above me, and then he covered the hole. The circle of light was blotted out. The sole of his shoe, I divined, was sealing my peephole. I inserted a finger and touched the tough leather, firm under his weight.

The sole of the murderer's shoe! Could I brand it? Could I mark a cross on that bootsole, so that the man would walk off with it, taking to his own door a definite clew of guilt? I groped frantically for a pencil. But, by the devil's luck, I had none. Nor could I produce anything else with which to make a mark.

But my hand did bring forth a tiny booklet. I knew it contained twenty-four one-cent stamps. Here, I thought, was a means of branding even more efficacious than a pencil. A common postage stamp!

I tore out a stamp and wet it. Then I felt for the knothole which the man above, who had not moved, still sealed. I thrust the stamp through the hole, sticky side up. There was just room for my fingers and the stamp. I pressed it firmly against the leather. There it stuck.

Then the man took a step to the right. His move uncovered the hole. Light again came through. Unwittingly, I reasoned, he would walk away with that stamp glued to the sole of his shoe. My own cue now was to remain quiet and let him escape. The police could inspect the footwear of Foy, Seixas and Rich.

EASING myself to a sitting posture on the barrel, I waited. In a few minutes I looked up and saw that the circle of light had disappeared. Then I heard the front door of the house open and shut. Which told me that the murderer had switched off the studio light and gone his way, with or without the loot.

I gave him time to be well away before I ascended the steps. After ascending, I began kicking the locked door. It was, however, too stout for me. Lusty kicks failed to smash the panels. Yet I continued kicking for a long time before giving up.

Then I descended to the cellar and retrieved my flash. With this I looked about for a tool with which to batter the door. I found a discarded andiron with a spiked point. Then I ascended the steps and began hacking on the door.

Finally I smashed one of its panels. Reaching through, I felt the key and unlocked the door. Passing through it, I turned on the studio light. There, in the same position, lay the body of Phil Dixon.

The complete disorder of the room evidenced the final searchings of the prowler. Dixon's radio cabinet, I noticed, had been turned back side front. From the floor beside it I picked up my own check for fifteen dollars, which I had given on the last poker hand to Dixon. The marauder had found the loot, for this check had been part of the winnings. Obviously Dixon had concealed all of it in the radio cabinet, in lieu of a safe, to secure it overnight. Finding it, the thief had tossed the check aside, keeping only the money.

I left the light burning and retreated from the house. I ran a quarter of a mile to my own bungalow and telephoned the Hollywood police. I timed the call. It was exactly 2:22 A.M.

The police came swiftly. I met them at Dixon's studio. They were headed by Inspector James—Big Jim—Singleton, who knew me personally. As a mystery story writer I had consulted him several times as to details of police procedure. He was a bushy-browed man with a florid face and a double chin. With him was a lean hawk of a man-

hunter by the name of Wambles.

A medical inspector and a fingerprint man went in for a look at the body. I remained outside and told what I knew of the crime to Singleton, Wambles and a group of their assistants. Singleton listened intently. His gaze at me was stern, but I could see that he believed my story. Wambles, however, seemed to doubt it. The look on his lean face was my first intimation that I myself might be suspected of the felony.

When I finished my story, Singleton said briskly to the group of us:

"Get this, everybody: Not a word must leak out about the stamp clew, to the reporters or any one else. Coburn, when you repeat your testimony, leave the stamp out of it. If the guilty man hears about the stamp, he will simply need to scrape it off his shoe."

Singleton then turned to one of his men and said:

"Drive down to headquarters, Smith. Tell Bryan to send a man to Homer Foy's apartment. Let him watch the apartment until daylight, then summon Foy to headquarters. Do the same with Forrest Rich and Paul Seixas. I want all three on the carpet at eight o'clock. While they're there we'll have men enter their apartments and look over every shoe."

Smith saluted, embarked in a car and drove down the hill. Singleton and his other men entered the studio. I heard them descending to the cellar. There they would find a broken bottle, perhaps some of my own blood and other evidence of violence.

They would also note that the cellar door had been battered from the inside. Yet I began to realize that all such evidence might have been created to support a false story. At the same time I felt sure that a search would reveal a one-cent stamp glued to a shoe sole of either Foy, Seixas or Rich.

In a little while Singleton and Wambles came out and joined me.

"The barrel is in the cellar just under the knothole," the inspector conceded. "I stood on it and found that it would be easy to stick a stamp on a shoe sole which happened to cover the hole. In fact, Coburn, we find no evidence which disproves your story. On the other hand, we have found nothing which proves it."

"No fingerprints?" I asked, frankly puzzled.

He shrugged and said:

"Plenty of them. Your prints, Dixon's, Foy's, Seixas's and Rich's may be scattered all over the studio. But what of it? It's admitted that you five all played poker here tonight."

Suddenly Wambles stepped forward and snapped at me in a tone freighted with suspicion—

"Let's see that convenient little book o' stamps."

I offered it. There was one stamp missing.

"How come you happened to have it handy?" Wambles demanded.

"Ask any story writer," I retorted. "They keep them for return postage. In this case the stamp should return us a murderer."

Wambles was utterly incredulous, so much so that instantly he became convinced of my own guilt.

"Stuck a stamp on his foot, did you?" he jeered. "Gee, ain't you thoughtful? I've heard of puttin' salt on a bird's tail, but I never figured that was the way to catch a murderer. My goodness, Mr. Coburn, you're a cool one under fire, ain't you? He bashed you down with a bottle and locked you in the cellar, then you put salt on his t—I mean you stuck a stamp on his foot! Gosh, with your presence of mind you oughta be on the force."

I turned beet red. Inspector Singleton came to my rescue and said to his assistant.

"Go easy, Wambles. I've known Coburn a long time. Being a mystery writer, maybe he'd think of this stamp trick quick'n you would."

"He sure would," sneered Wambles, "because *I* wouldn't think of it at all. The truth is he croaked Dixon, then figured to fool us with a bedtime yarn about a stamp."

I jumped up, blazing mad. I might even have taken a punch at his jeering face if Singleton hadn't caught my arm.

"Go home and cool off, Coburn," he said. "Report to my office at 8:30 in the morning."

I WENT home.

At eight-thirty in the morning I drove down to Hollywood police headquarters, on Cahuenga Street just off the boulevard. There I was told that Homer Foy, Paul Seixas and Forrest Rich were in the inspector's office for questioning.

I waited in the corridor. Foy was the first to emerge from Singleton's office. He was in a surly temper. He wore no necktie. His eyes were puffed, and there was a dirty, purplish hue to the overnight stubble on his chin. He flung past me without speaking and left the station.

Ten minutes later came Paul Seixas. Seixas was quite unruffled. He was dressed impeccably; the police summons had in no way impaired his dignity.

"A hellish break, what, Coburn?" he said, seeing me. "To think we were all playing cards with Dix only last night!"

"The police seem to think one of us four did it," I offered.

"Naturally they need a scapegoat." He smiled. "But to me it's quite plainly the work of some bum. The fellow watched the poker game through a window and saw Dix stow away all that money. Later he broke in for it. That's all."

Seixas followed Foy to the street.

Rich was held on the carpet for an hour longer. He emerged in a nervous sweat. Moreover, he was white with anger.

"It's an outrage, Coburn!" he said. "They had the nerve to insinuate I might have killed Phil Dixon for a measly sixteen thousand dollars!"

Just then Singleton came to his door and beckoned me. I went in. He closed the door and said—

"We've drawn a blind haul for that one-cent stamp, Coburn."

Incredulous, I asked—

"You searched every shoe at the three apartments?"

He frowned.

"Yes. That was done while those fellows were here. We hardly expected to find any loot, for a guilty man would have stashed it somewhere on the way home. But we did expect to find a stamped shoe."

"What about the shoes they wore while you talked with them?"

"I looked," he said, "without letting them know what for. Not one of them wears a stamp."

I learned that each of the three men had been found at home in bed at about 3:30 A.M. Each claimed to have arrived home before one o'clock, but only Rich had a witness. Rich's English valet had informed the police that his master came in shortly after midnight. That valet was a shifty sort, though; I for one would not have banked on his testimony.

"When I repeated your story to Foy, Seixas and Rich," Singleton told me, "I left the stamp out of it."

"Let's keep on leaving it out," I begged. "Somebody in town owns a stamped shoe, and that person killed Dixon."

Singleton did not share my confidence in the stamp clew, but he agreed to keep it a secret.

"Show up at the inquest at ten o'clock tomorrow," he directed, then he excused me.

I walked thoughtfully up to Hollywood Boulevard. In spite of the failure to discover the branded shoe, I still believed that guilt lay among Seixas, Foy and Rich. My guess was that one of them had, while undressing, noticed the stamp on his shoe and removed it.

The *Citizen* already had out an extra announcing the crime. Every detail was exploited except the clew of the stamp.

What really made me wince was that certain friends of long standing greeted me with marked restraint. They listened to my story, which omitted the stamp, but it was plain that they did not altogether trust it. The black hounds of scandal were dogging me. At any rate, no one was inclined to give me any better break than Foy, Seixas or Rich.

I lunched at Henry's, somberly and alone.

Then again I paced the boulevard, gazing at footwear rather than at faces. A stamp on a shoe! That key, and perhaps no other, would unlock the mystery.

Who, if not Foy, Seixas or Rich, had covered that hole with his foot?

IN midafternoon I bought a late edition of the *Citizen.* Looking for a place to read it, I entered a shoe-shining parlor, mounted a bench and asked for a shine. Seated there, I read the account of Dixon's death. My own testimony—except for the stamp—was rehashed. The editorial implication that my story was none too credible made me flush. Such phrases as, "Coburn alleges," and "If Coburn's story can be accepted," seemed to damn me.

Just as the Greek bootblack completed my shine, I looked across and saw a customer who, on the opposite bench, was also having a shine. He was a tall man in a bright blue suit, with a deep cleft in his chin. He was engrossed with the front page of the *Citizen.*

I stepped down and gave a coin to the boy. It was then that I saw a one-cent stamp. It was glued to the sole of the left shoe of the blue-suited customer who, seated with his shins on a level with my eyes, gave me an excellent view of the bottom of his shoes.

The sight staggered me. I was about to run out and call a policeman when, turning suddenly, I bumped into one. It was Detective Wambles.

"O. K, Brix," Wambles said, grinning wolfishly, "you don't need to tail him any more. We can make the pinch here and now."

The blue-suited man stepped down and grabbed my arm.

"Dug up some deadwood, did you?" he chirped to Wambles.

"And then some," Wambles assured him. "He's in it up to his neck."

Wambles took my other arm. I shook loose and blazed at him:

"Hold on! This man has a one-cent stamp on the sole of his shoe."

Brix chuckled. After taking a look at his shoe sole he said to Wambles:

"Yeah, you were right. They don't rub off. Flatfooting up and down the street only makes 'em stick tighter."

This observation seemed crazy until Wambles explained it.

"When I assigned Brix to tail you," he said, "we had an argument. He said your stamp clew was no good, even if you told the truth. He claimed it would wear off a shoe sole before a man could walk a mile. To prove it, he sent out for a stamp and had me paste it on his shoe."

"But I was wrong," Brix admitted. "The stamp sticketh closer than a brother."

"The stamp's the bunk anyway," growled Wambles, "because there wasn't any. But say, Brix, there's a dame in the case. We found out that this pen-pusher, Coburn, handed the money to a skirt about one o'clock last night, at the corner of Sunset and Vine."

That statement almost shocked me dead. In a moment, however, its very absurdity left me weak with relief. From every angle it was ridiculous. Feeling sure that I could easily disprove it, I went along willingly enough with Wambles and Brix. I was anxious for the moral support of Inspector Singleton. But when we reached headquarters Singleton was not there. An inspector by the name of Savier, grim and hostile, took me in charge.

"Where," he demanded fiercely, "is Estelle Mitchell?"

I had never heard of the woman, and said so.

"Come clean, Coburn," Wambles chimed in. "You phoned her from your hilltop bungalow at 12:30 last night and told her to meet you right away at the corner of Sunset and Vine."

The intersection named is that of the two broadest thoroughfares in Hollywood.

"I did not," was my indignant retort. "The only call I made last night was the one to the police at 2:22."

They scoffed and bullied. Again and again Wambles and Savier speared me with the same question—

"Where is Estelle Mitchell?"

FORTY times I swore I didn't know her. Finally my friend Singleton came in and broke up the party.

"What's it all about?" he demanded.

Wambles explained:

"There's no phone at Dixon's, but there is at Coburn's. Being on the Hollywoodland circuit, it's not a dial phone. Today I dug up the record of a call made from it at 12:30 last night."

"Where to?" Singleton asked sharply.

"The call was to the Palermo Hotel," Wambles explained, "which is here in town, on Yucca Street near Ivar. I beat it to the Palermo and got hold of the switchboard girl who was on duty last night. She remembers the 12:30 call very well, because there were few calls after midnight. She was dozing on her job when it came. A man's voice asked for Estelle Mitchell, and the girl plugged in on the right room.

"Then," went on Wambles, "the girl got to wonderin' what sort of a man would be callin' a dame at 12:30 A.M, routing her outa bed. She says she was curious enough to listen in for a few seconds, and she heard the windup of the confab. The man said, 'Meet me at Sunset and Vine'; to which the dame answered, 'O. K,' and hung up."

Singleton looked at me searchingly. I assured him that if such a call was made from my phone I knew nothing of it.

"It was your phone all right," Wambles insisted. "Here's what happened: You had just arrived home with a package of hot loot. You had to get rid of it. You had this Mitchell dame on the string, so you called her and told her to meet you right away at Sunset and Vine. Then you drove Dixon's car there, handed her the package and told her to lay low with it. After that you drove back up the hill, broke a bottle in Dixon's cellar, bashed in the cellar door and phoned the police."

"Hold on," objected Singleton. "After this Mitchell woman received the call did she leave the hotel?"

"Not openly," Wambles answered. "Naturally she wouldn't, considering the nature of her errand. But her room is at the rear of the second floor. It was a cinch for her to go down the back steps and out the courtyard door; at one in the morning no one would have even seen her. The Palermo is only three blocks from Sunset and Vine. What she did was to receive the package from Coburn there and then slip back to her room."

"Have you braced her?" Singleton demanded.

"No. Because at eight this morning she checked out, bag and baggage. Left no forwardin' address. Wouldn't even let the hotel call a taxi. Last seen of her she was gettin' on an eastbound street car on the boulevard."

"At eight o'clock this morning?"

"At eight this morning. And so far I've had no luck gettin' a line on her. She'd only been at the Palermo a week. The hotel people don't know where she came from. So the only way to find out is to shake down Coburn."

"If you'd shake a few cobwebs out of your own fat head," I retorted, "you'd know it was either Foy, Seixas or Rich who used my phone at 12:30. My slant is that one of those three left Dixon's with the loot, feeling sure I was either dead or stunned in the cellar. He wanted to phone. He was afraid of a public phone, so he used mine. He told the woman to meet him. She did, and later checked out of her hotel with the loot. Maybe it was money he was impelled to give her under some desperate stress, such as blackmail; or maybe he just used her as a safe."

"What about the voice test?" suggested Savier. "We can get the Palermo night switchboard girl on the phone now. Over the phone we can have Coburn say to her: 'Meet me at Sunset and Vine'."

"All right," agreed Singleton, "provided that Foy, Seixas and Rich stand the same test. Send for them."

A car was dispatched for Foy, Seixas and Rich. In less than an hour they were in the room with us.

Forrest Rich had cooled down by now and was extremely docile. Seixas gave his usual effect of gray dignity. But Foy was a wreck. He had been drinking all day and was still unshaven. His face was dark and bloated.

Singleton called the Palermo and had the night girl summoned to the phone. He talked with her awhile, and by his expression I knew that she was confirming the report of Wambles.

"Listen to four voices in turn," Singleton instructed her. "Then try to tell me which voice made the 12:30 call."

He coached each of us to say six words, and six only. We did so, speaking into the mouthpiece of the telephone. In my own turn I felt like seven kinds of an ass when I said to the invisible female—

"Meet me at Sunset and Vine."

I heard her giggle, and at that humiliating moment I wished that she had been choked instead of Dixon.

After four of us had voiced the silly phrase Singleton conversed over the wire with the girl.

Turning to us, he reported:

"She says it's no good. In her time she's heard too many men's voices asking for dates over the phone. It might be any one of you, she says, but she can't be sure."

Singleton turned and conferred further with the girl. I saw him taking notes. Then he talked with the manager and day clerk of the hotel. Finally he reported to us:

"They can't recall that any man ever called on Mitchell the week she was there. She must have met her men friends outside the hotel. I got a good description of her, though. A tall brunette with belladonna eyes. Left the hotel wearing a black tailored suit, a black fox fur and a red hat. That's all. You men are excused. But be at the inquest at ten in the morning."

We dispersed.

At ten o'clock in the morning I reported at the inquest. It was utterly fruitless. Estelle Mitchell had not been found. The part of my own testimony which concerned a knothole and a stamp was given in private to the coroner and his jury. The inquest adjourned with a verdict of death by agency unknown. No arrest or detention was recommended.

A WEEK went by. Nothing happened. The Dixon case grew cold. By then a new sensation was engrossing Singleton. But the Dixon case, and that only, continued to weigh upon my own mind and conscience. I continued to study it. I stood for hours at a time watching the crowds on Hollywood Boulevard. Who among them, I wondered, wore a stamp on his shoe? And where could I find a belladonna brunette with a black fox fur and a red hat?

Those questions were dogging me one forenoon a week after the inquest as I strolled along South Hill Street in downtown Los Angeles.

I did not know whether or not detectives were still trailing Foy, Seixas and Rich in the hope of being led to the loot. Nor did I know whether I myself was being shadowed. Often, in an effort to settle the point, I looked back. I saw no trailer. Then I tried the trick of stopping suddenly before a plate glass window, pretending to window shop, but in reality looking for the reflection of Wambles or Brix as he might pass behind me.

It did not work. Yet in an indirect manner it stimulated within my own brain an entirely new conception of the mystery. For, as I gazed into a plate glass window, I became aware that I stood before the downtown ticket office of the Southern Pacific Railroad. A gilded invitation was inscribed upon the window:

RIDE the ESPEE
No finer trains run than—
The SUNRISE LIMITED to New Orleans and New York and
The SUNSET LIMITED to Frisco.

I recalled that the S. P. westbound train known as the Sunset Limited was one I had often used myself; I remembered that it left Los Angeles at 9:00 A.M. and reached the end of its transcontinental journey, San Francisco, at sunset.

Two ideas popped in my brain. Sunset! Nine o'clock!

It hit me with a jolt that Estelle Mitchell had checked out, bag and baggage, from a Hollywood hotel at 8:00 A.M. That would have given her an hour in which to catch the Sunset Limited, leaving at 9:00. In vague support was the fact that she had boarded a street car heading in the general direction of the S. P. depot.

Suppose the murderer had said to her over the phone, at the conclusion of his brief directions—

"Meet me on the Sunset at nine."

I reasoned that the switchboard girl might easily have imagined "Vine" instead of "nine", because in her own experience men were more prone to make dates for street corners than for limited trains.

The bee of this theory began buzzing

furiously. I walked on, turning east on Fifth, and the more I thought of the train angle the more logical it seemed. A murderer with hot loot on his hands, I reasoned, would quite likely be in a sweat to leave town. Also, if he has a paramour, he might want to take her with him. The known fact about Estelle Mitchell was that she had left her hotel at 8:00 A.M. That she had made a nocturnal excursion to a nearby street corner was only an assumption.

If the murderer were some unknown prowler he could actually have joined the woman on that outgoing S. P. train. If he were Foy, Seixas or Rich, he could have made the appointment with the intention of keeping it. The early summons by the police would have balked him and warned him not to risk trying any immediate departure from town.

The woman, failing to meet her companion at the depot or on the train, would have wondered why. Then the morning papers would have told her why. That would frighten her, and she would simply fade out of the picture.

At the worst, I decided, my theory was worth a few inquiries at the S. P. depot. I hurried on until I reached that terminal. First I tried the station master. He could not help me. Then I interviewed the gateman who had been on duty for the Sunset Limited eight days before. I described Estelle Mitchell. He could not remember her.

There was no record of a reservation in the name of Mitchell, Foy, Seixas or Rich. Finally I tried the district Pullman agent on the second floor of the station. I asked him—

"Is the sleeper crew of the Sunset Limited which left here on the 14th in town now?"

"No," he said.

"When will they next be here?"

He looked it up and found that the crew of colored porters, as well as the same Pullman conductor, were now on the Daylight Limited, due in Los Angeles at 8:45 tonight.

I thanked him and went out. I resolved to interview that crew of porters and conductor. One of them might recall a woman wearing a black suit, black fur and red hat, and be able to say whether a man had ridden the train with her.

It was only noon. I had nothing to do, so I remained at the depot. I lunched at the depot restaurant and then loafed all afternoon in the station lobby. For a week I had been watching crowds, and this crowd was as good as any. For hours I mulled over my theory. It was a long shot, and yet I felt no inclination to relinquish my hunch that the switchboard girl had mistaken "nine" for "Vine".

Had Estelle Mitchell stood in this lobby eight days ago, waiting in vain for Foy, Seixas or Rich? Or had she actually met some other man? If so, would a porter, after eight days, recall him? Suddenly it occurred to me that a male passenger is almost sure to prop his feet on the opposite seat during a long journey. A stamp stuck on his shoe sole would thus be exposed, and might well have been noticed by some trainman passing in the aisle. Or a porter, during a night train ride, might have shined that shoe.

THE afternoon dragged interminably. At six I ate supper at the station restaurant. Then again I loafed in the lobby. It was the rush hour. The foyer was milling with traffic. In a loud tone I heard a caller announce the imminent departure of a train for Phoenix.

It was not the Daylight, so I was not interested. I was seated on a bench facing the counter of the depot check stand. A redcap had just approached that counter and offered a baggage check, together with a dollar bill. Obviously he had been dispatched on that errand by some patron of the train now about to leave Los Angeles. The check stand clerk brought him a brown Gladstone bag. He pushed this bag, flat on its side, across the counter to the redcap.

"Eighty cents due," he said.

It was while the redcap waited for two dimes in change that I saw the stamp! Instantly, because of the peculiar position of the stamp, I knew it must be the same one-center which I myself had thrust through a knothole

in Dixon's floor.

It was pasted to the bottom of the Gladstone bag. That leather surface, I realized with a start, would feel the same to a finger groping in the dark as the sole of a shoe. Moreover, this bag had been in check nine days. Eighty cents' charges had accrued at a dime a day, the first day being paid in advance. I was sure of it all.

The redcap now took the bag and skipped briskly toward an exit leading to the train sheds. Like a shot I was after him. I followed him to an iron gate which gave entrance to the track on which stood the Phoenix-bound train. The guard passed the redcap without challenge, but he barred my passage with his arm and asked to see my ticket.

"A police matter," I said desperately. "I'll be right back."

"O.K," he said, and passed me.

I dashed after the redcap. He was some thirty yards ahead of me when he reached the steps of a Pullman coach. With a wisecrack to the attending porter, he skipped nimbly up the steps.

"Reservation, suh?" the porter asked me.

"I'm not leaving. Just saying good-by to a friend."

Brushing past him, I mounted the vestibule. I turned into the car ahead. After traversing the narrow corridor I reached the area of sleeper sections. At the far end of it I saw the redcap. He still had the Gladstone bag and was knocking on the door of Drawing Room A.

Evidently the occupant bade him enter, for he did so. Ten seconds later he came jauntily out. He flipped a tip into the air, then dropped it into his pocket. He passed me in mid-aisle as I hastened on toward Drawing Room A. Reaching the door, I knocked.

"Come in," summoned a voice.

My heart stood still, for I recognized that voice.

Then I entered the compartment and closed the door behind me.

I faced the lone occupant, who was seated beside a Gladstone bag.

"Well, here we are," I challenged.

He did not answer. My intrusion seemed to have upset him.

"I thought it was the sole of your shoe," I said, "but it was only the bottom of a satchel you'd set on the floor to fill with money. When you picked the bag up it seemed to me you were merely stepping off the hole. Then you drove to the S. P. depot and checked the bag."

Still he did not answer.

"If you were still being watched today," I baited him, "you eluded the watcher by some dodge and reached this stateroom. From here you sent a redcap for the bag."

Before I knew it he was at my throat. His strong hard fingers had me, shutting off my breath, stifling me with that same steel grip which had done for Dixon. He was like a beast suddenly gone mad, attacking before I could strike or shout.

My knees buckled under his onslaught. He fell with me, holding me in his grip. It tightened and under it I writhed impotently. His knee was on my chest and his fingers dug deeper, numbing me.

My tongue thickened, and my eyes seemed to bleed. I was only faintly aware of a jolt, followed by slow motion as the train pulled out of the station. I felt the sensation of drowning, of strangulation, of helplessness.

Then, quite suddenly, his grip slackened. I was able to gasp, then to breathe. Then his weight slithered limply to the floor at my side. Homer Foy—for it was Foy, the fallen movie star—had mysteriously ceased his murderous attack.

In his place I saw Wambles, who stooped over me, holding the police gun with which he had just struck Foy a blow on the head. The stateroom door now stood open.

Wambles jerked me to my feet.

"Brix and I've taken turn about trailing you for a week, Coburn," he said.

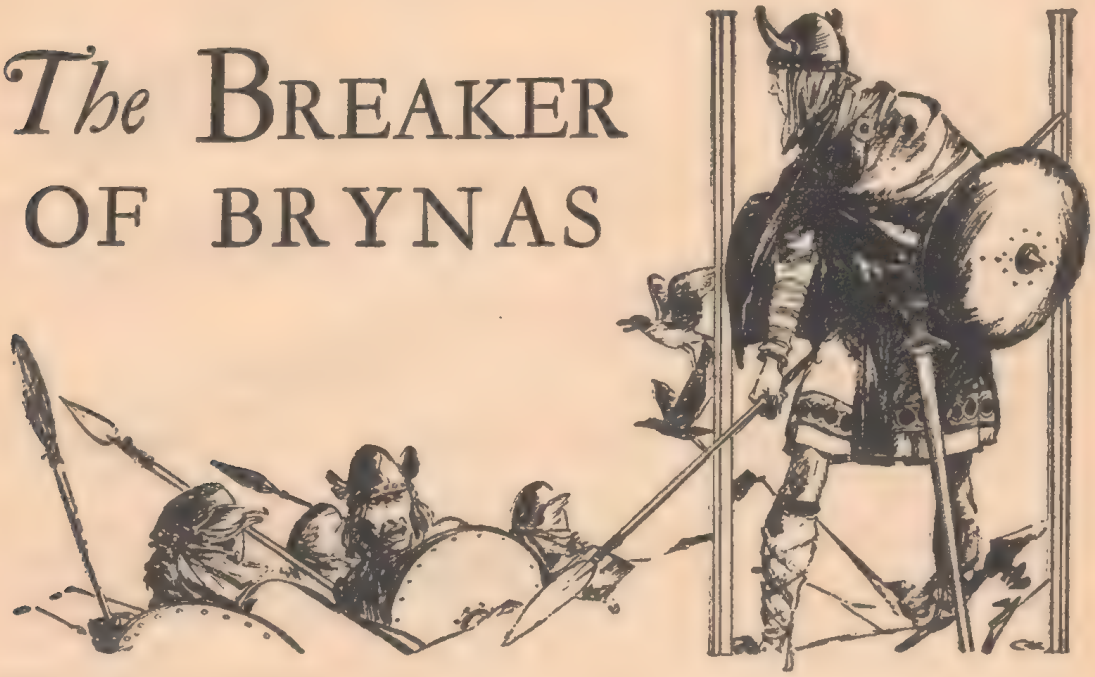
"Open it," I gasped, pointing at the stamped bag.

With a key from Foy's pocket Wambles opened it. Inside were the spoils of the Hollywoodland murder.

By MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON

Author of "The Road Without Turning"

The BREAKER OF BRYNAS



NOW Thorgrim of Orkadal had tarried three days at the hall of Bersi the Unsparing, who had a bad name in the Northland for being greedy of gold. And Astrid, the niece of Bersi, had looked with favor upon Thorgrim, which pleased not Bersi her uncle, nor Vikar the Squinting, his son. These two plotted how they might waylay Thorgrim and seize his ship and the two chests of gold it contained.

It was agreed between Bersi the Unsparing and his son Vikar that Vikar should sail ahead with twice fifty men and two ships and lie in wait for Thorgrim at the Island Höd.

Now Thorgrim, all unaware of this treachery, stood on the *lypting* and steered *Stígandi*—the *Stepping One*—an exceeding handsome ship painted scarlet with the shields along the gunwales alternating black and yellow, while its sail of black *vadmal* was embroidered with a golden dragon and the sun glittered from the thin gold plates on the dragon's head at its prow.

Thorgrim, among the white horses of the surf, sang to *Stígandi* his ship as he steered; for it was said of Thorgrim that song flowed from his lips as swift as the tide races through Hereyjar.

Sang Thorgrim:

"Hindered by harsh days,
Battered by strong winds,
Stígandi staggered
Through the whales' acres.
Sharp were the knife edged
Spears of the hail-scur,
Seared were the sails by
Swords of the storm wrack.
Fierce were the fangs of
Wolves of the waters."

To him there on the *lypting* came Einar Björn with whom Thorgrim had sworn foster-brotherhood under the looped turf. Day was ending, and Einar Björn was troubled.

Said Einar Björn:

"I like not the actions of Vikar the Squinting, Bersi's son, for did you note that he left the feast before it was finished, taking with him twice fifty men?

Moreover, there were six ships resting on the rollers in Bersi's ship sheds when we arrived, and there were only four when we departed. And I heard the wolf howl under the ash branches last night, which mayhap means that some of us here are death-fated."

Said Thorgrim—

"No man may escape his fate; but I will make a vow here and now of two things that I will do before I meet mine."

Einar Björn asked what might those two things be.

Answered Thorgrim:

"I vow by the sword's edge and the ship's side that if Vikar the Squinting be treacherous, I will kill him. And I will bring Astrid, Bersi's kinswoman, to my bed as wife."

Night was come upon them as they talked and Thorgrim steered for the bay wherein lay the Island Höd. There came to him one Hulf Ragged Beard and pointed to the newly risen moon.

Said Thorgrim:

"I see that it is the moon of Urd and that its twin horns spell ill omen. But mayhap others than we are death-fated."

Said Hulf—

"Many highborn men will pass on to their fathers on account of that moon."

In that bay they found a small island hard by the Island Höd and there they moored *Stígandi*. The greater part of the men took leather sleeping bags ashore and put up tents and built fires, it being very cold.

And Vikar the Squinting, hiding hard by behind the Island Höd, saw the sparks from those fires.

The wolves howled from beneath the ash trees on the nearby shores.

Hlod, the thrall, said:

"The gray horses of the Jötun women are howling. They smell blood."

All men looked at the horns of the moon of Urd and said naught; save Thorgrim, who thus made answer—

"The howling of the dogs of the Nörnir is music to the ears of a Viking."

Vikar the Squinting, from his hiding place, watched the shadows of Thorgrim's fires playing among the treetops. Nor did Vikar or his men show fire or talk loudly, fearing that their voices might be heard above the sound of the wash of the waves on the beaches. Vikar took counsel with his men, deciding to attack at dawn when men's minds are dazed with sleep.

Before dawn Bersi the Unsparing joined his son, bringing another ship and more housecarls.

Harek Oxfoot was awake as fire guard over Thorgrim's tents when Vikar the Squinting and his men came running in upon those sleeping.

The clash of spears brought forth Thorgrim, his sword, Neck-Biter, in hand; but without shield, helmet or *bryna* of mail. Nonetheless he hewed at Björn Sandi, one of Vikar's men, and struck off his right arm; whereupon Olaf of Fagälir came at him with shield and sword and Thorgrim smote Olaf so stoutly, his helmet he broke and his head he cleft from pate to chin. Mighty and terrible was the work of his sword.

DAYLIGHT came on apace, but the mist made it hard to tell friend from foe. The din of swords rang among the tents and at the ship's side where the ship's guard fought mightily against those of Vikar's men who strove to board *Stígandi*. Many of Thorgrim's men had been killed or wounded or made prisoners, among these latter being Einar Björn, Thorgrim's foster-brother, who had been wounded and made captive as he lay sleeping.

There were few shields among Thorgrim's men, but they fought with fury. Because of this fury Vikar's men ceased for a little to attack them and fell back a few paces.

Thorgrim took counsel with his men. Some of them complained that they had no swords.

Said Thorgrim—

"Take them from the bodies of the slain."

This they did.

Said Thorgrim:

"A sword is a fine thing, but there is one thing better, and that is courage. Let us now arrange ourselves in *svinfylking**. We, Hulf Ragged Beard and I, will take shields and form the snout; and then three, and then five of

*Swine array: a wedge formation

you, with shields form behind us. The shieldless men will follow hard in rear. And it may be that we can cut through their array to our own ship once more."

Whereupon they did as he said, forming *svinfylking*, and rushed at Vikar's men with locked shields in the van. They broke through Vikar's men and came to their ship where Thorgrim turned and laid about him, singing as he fought.

Thorgrim sang:

"Send word to the wolfings,
Gray horses of Jötun,
Gray dogs of the Nörnir,
The blood feast awaits them!
Come forth from the moonhall,
Dark ravens of Fenrir,
And follow Neck-Biter,
My sword of the sea kings,
My snake of the *bryna*,
The tongue of the scabbard,
The breaker of helmets.
Scream woe to the vanquished,
Ye servants of Odin,
For flesh of the fallen
Is meat to the wolfings,
And blood of the slain ones,
Is wine to the ravens.
Come, slaken thy thirst in
The dew of the corpses,
The froth of the weapons,
The sweat of the wounds.
For gray are the wolfings,
And black are the ravens.
But red is the track of
Jarl Thorgrim, their feeder,
And rich is the feasting."

When they came to their ship they found Hauk of Orkadal wounded sorely but fighting. The unarmed men with Thorgrim armed themselves quickly, and fought Vikar's men with spear and arrow, sword and ax, as they swarmed at the gunwales.

Thorgrim bore forward and drew up a shieldburg, with those of his men whom he had left, and pressed Vikar's men back whence they had come.

Of Thorgrim's first strength of fifty men, scarce fifteen men remained; for many had been captured on shore, and many killed and wounded. So bravely had these men fought that the men of Bersi and Vikar grew weary and paused in their fighting, drawing back from *Stígandi's* gunwales. The sun was risen now, blood-red, crashing lances of light through the dark woods and over the bay, driving the swirling mist before it.

As Thorgrim's men drew breath and examined their wounds some among them noted a light *scuta* which entered the bay, running before the wind, nor did they know that it held Astrid, the kinswoman of Bersi the Unsparing, come to plead with her uncle for the life of Thorgrim.

Some among Thorgrim's men advised flight, seeing that Vikar's men were vanquished for the moment. But Thorgrim paid no heed to them, being anxious for Einar Björn, his foster-brother. While they talked Vikar's men appeared on the beach with their prisoners; among them was Einar Björn, whom thralls forced to his knees and twisted sticks in his hair, baring his neck for a blow from Vikar's sword.

Said Vikar:

"See you, Thorgrim, how badly things go with you. Either surrender your gold and depart in peace, or I will behead Einar Björn and these others, and overcome you and seize the gold in any case. What say you?"

Thorgrim said naught, being sore troubled. But Einar Björn spoke, saying:

"Go quickly, foster-brother, while there is yet time. I kneel under the shadow of the sword's edge, but Vikar seeks to trap thee. As for me and those with me, we do not fear to die."

At those words one of the thralls struck Einar Björn with a spear shaft across the mouth, so that he became silent.

Said Thorgrim—

"Fear not, foster-brother, we will not leave thee thus to die alone."

To Vikar Thorgrim said—

"We will yield ourselves and our gold and our weapons on your promise to spare our lives and the lives of those whom you hold."

Said Vikar—

"Bring then your weapons and place them with those others of your companions' weapons and it will be as I have said."

When this was done Thorgrim said:

"Now we have abided by our word. Do thou abide by thine."

Vikar said—

"Of what avail are pledges given to the death-fated?"

And he ordered Thorgrim and his men seized and bound and tied together in a line. Nor were they bound loosely.

THEREAFTER Vikar and Bersi and their men seized the gold and all the goods on the ship and carried them to the poles for division. But they did not intend dividing them until after the captives should be put to death.

Bersi and Vikar took their food and seated themselves, for they wished to have Thorgrim and his men beheaded leisurely and in no hurry that day.

While they ate, Astrid, the kinswoman of Bersi, came up behind Thorgrim where he stood in line.

Said Astrid:

"My uncle means to kill thee this day. Here is a knife to cut thy bonds and then canst run quickly with me to my boat and avoid this death-doom. Life can be very sweet when one is as young as we are."

Said Thorgrim:

"There is no doubt that life could be very sweet with thee, Astrid, but I can not go away from my followers or let them walk leaderless through the portals of *Hel*. Were it otherwise, Astrid, right gladly would I go with thee."

Seeing that he was not to be moved, Astrid returned to her boat where she sat on the forward bench, her cloak thrown over her head.

The chill wind swept over the bound captives and some among them shivered. Seeing this, Thorgrim chided them.

Said Thorgrim—

"They will think you fear death if they see you tremble."

Thereafter none of them shivered.

Vikar the Squinting brought his sword to behead all the captives. He taunted Thorgrim and his men with their deaths, but it is not recorded that any there among them made answer.

Men say that Vikar first cut off the heads of three of the grievously wounded thralls. Vikar asked his father, Bersi, if he had seen him shudder at the work, for, said Vikar, it is said that a man shudders after cutting off three heads.

Said Bersi, Vikar's father—

"I did not see thee shudder."

Then a fourth man was led forward and sticks were wound in his hair. While the thralls held him Vikar had speech with this one.

Said Vikar—

"What thinkest thou of thy death?"

Said the man:

"So long as I die in good fame I fear not death. But I should hate to live as thou wilt live, Vikar, with shame hanging over thee the rest of thy life."

Vikar liked not this and struck quickly —so quickly that he only wounded the man on the shoulder, whereat the man laughed.

Said he—

"If thou canst not kill a bound man more easily, what then wouldst thou do with an armed man in battle?"

Vikar grew angry and struck again, and this one ceased to live. Three more men did Vikar behead, until he began to grow weary.

Said Vikar—

"I will end my labors by beheading Thorgrim, and the thralls can finish the rest."

Thorgrim was led forward, and two thralls started to wind sticks in his long hair.

Said Thorgrim:

"I am a jarl's son, and it is not fitting that sticks should be wound in my hair, and that I should be led to the death stroke by the thrall born. Nor do I fear death, so much evil have I seen this day and the end of so many brave men. But I prefer to be led to the death blow by some one no less in birth than thou thyself, Vikar. It should not be hard to find such a one. Let him wind his hands in my hair and hold it back so that it does not grow bloody."

It was agreed that this should be done; and Havar of Jamtaland, Vikar's companion, wound his hands in Thorgrim's hair.

Vikar raised his sword for the blow; but before dealing it, he questioned Thorgrim, as he had the others, asking him how he regarded his death.

Said Thorgrim:

"I do not mind dying. But otherwise I am sorry, because of two vows I had made which will now go unfulfilled."

Vikar asked what they might be.

Answered Thorgrim:

"One was to kill Vikar the Squinting,

son of Bersi; and the other was to bring Astrid, the niece of Bersi, to my bed as wife, despite her kinsmen."

Said Vikar—

"I will prevent thee doing these things."

And he rushed at Thorgrim, swinging his sword in great anger.

He struck, but when Thorgrim heard the blade whistle through the air he jerked away his head strongly, and it so happened that the blow fell on Havar of Jamtaland, who was holding his hair, and cut off both his arms at the elbows.

Thorgrim rose quickly.

Said he—

"Whose hands are these I have in my hair?" and shook them off, so that they rolled upon the ground.

Thorgrim's men laughed.

Vikar rushed at him again with upraised sword, but to reach him he had to pass in front of Einar Björn, Thorgrim's foster-brother, who stood bound, in the line. Einar put forward his foot and tripped Vikar, so that he fell full length. Thorgrim's men again laughed.

In falling, Vikar's sword was loosened from his grasp and slid along the ground several lengths from him. At sight of the sword, Thorgrim placed his foot upon it and strained at the cords that bound his wrists. They were strong cords and would not give. Vikar rose to his knees. Thorgrim strained again, his foot still upon the sword hilt. Vikar rose to his feet. Again Thorgrim strained. Vikar came toward him and reached for the sword. Thorgrim bent double and because of his great strength he broke the bonds at last. He drove Vikar a pace backward, and lifted the sword. Then Thorgrim struck Vikar and killed him.

Said Thorgrim—

"Now have I fulfilled one of my two vows, and I feel a great deal better than I did before."

While Bersi and his men had not yet recovered their wits, Thorgrim very swiftly cut the rope that bound the captives. The ones he freed first he told to run to the weapon pile which was nearby, while the next few unbound their companions.

Bersi seized his sword and rushed at Thorgrim. But Thorgrim cut him down with a single sword swoop and leaped among Bersi's followers. There was a great confusion among them, and Thorgrim killed many of them before they could recover their weapons. The heart went out of the rest, and some of them fled; but Bersi's thralls begged for mercy. This mercy Thorgrim granted them, except those thralls who had wound the sticks into the hair of the slain ones. All of Bersi's kinsmen were killed by Thorgrim's followers after they had armed themselves from the weapon pile.

Leaving his men to bury the dead, Thorgrim sought out Astrid where she sat in the boat, her head covered by her cloak. Astrid was amazed to see him, and exceeding happy; and he brought her back and placed her on board *Stigandi,* at which she was well content. Afterward, Thorgrim sailed back to Hordaland, seized all of Bersi's property and his bondservants, and burned down Bersi's hall. Then he sailed homeward, returning to Orkadal with seven ships and much wealth, where he had left with but a little.

Thjodolf Arnorsson, the scald of Harald Hardradi, afterward made a song of these happenings; and men sing it in Gautland to this day.

A Bigger and Better Adventure!

The new enlarged ADVENTURE makes its appearance with the next, or June issue. 15c per copy—once a month. The same unbeatable authors and the same incomparable stories. But more of them! Don't fail to read ADVENTURE for June.

Continuing

RIFLED GOLD

By W. C. TUTTLE

Author of "Hashknife Hartley"

The Story Thus Far:

IN ALL his career as a range detective Hashknife Hartley had never seen a series of robberies grow into such a profound mystery as the Comanche Chief mine case at Painted Wells. Thieves—unknown, unseen, without a single clew—had robbed the mine innumerable times and, emboldened, had finally killed a Cattlemen's Association investigator. So Hashknife had been summoned by the Association and, with his partner, Sleepy Stevens, was traveling by train across Arizona when he had the first hunch that the case was not going to be a simple one.

In the railroad car Hashknife met Miss Elene Corey, on her way to Painted Wells to attend the funeral of her father, who had been shot and robbed of ten thousand dollars. He had borrowed the money from Ed Ault, a gambler, to pay off the mortgage on his ranch. Hashknife wondered at once whether there was not some connection between Corey's murder and the gold thefts at the mine. But he was hardly prepared for the further coincidence which Elene Corey, unaware that he was a detective, revealed. The suspect held for her father's murder was none other than her own brother-in-law, husband of her sister Gladys—Ken Steele, the estranged son of old Silver Steele, owner of the Comanche Chief mine.

In the midst of the conversation the train stopped at Porcupine; and, as it pulled out, Hashknife, Sleepy and Miss Corey were astonished to see a man in cowboy garb leap aboard just in time to elude some gunmen who were pursuing him. The man introduced himself as Cornelius Van Avery, an Easterner. He decided to get off at Red Hill, nearest stop to Painted Wells, which was also Miss Corey's station.

At Red Hill Hashknife and Sleepy bought horses and rode them to Painted Wells, thereby missing a stagecoach holdup in which Van Avery was slightly wounded and Miss Corey badly frightened. Van Avery was assisted to Painted Wells by Sheriff Banty Brayton and Deputy Handsome Hartwig. The baffled law officers insisted that Van Avery must be a detective since only he was assaulted and robbed.

Hashknife, after talking with the officers, decided to keep his profession a secret even from Silver Steele, who was hiring him sight unseen. While Van Avery, mistaken for a detective, was again shot at in Painted Wells, Hashknife and Sleepy went their way in peace, posing as ordinary cowboys. Hashknife met Ed Ault, proprietor of the Yucca Saloon, who had lent the late Milt Corey the ten thousand dollars; and loafed regularly in the hardware store of the local assayer, Rick Nelson, who had once cheated Corey in a mining deal. But, using the indirect methods for which he was famous, he avoided Silver Steele; and he did not attract attention by visiting the Comanche Chief mine.

One day, as he and Sleepy were discussing the tense atmosphere of the town, they were startled to hear a burst of gunfire down the street. They ran toward the sound. It was a false alarm. Van Avery, the tenderfoot, had bought a .45 automatic, and it had gone off by accident. Nevertheless, the shooting put Sleepy's nerves on edge.

"Hashknife," he said, "we know what we were sent here to do—but let's wire the Association

that you've resigned and that we're heading for the hills again."

Hashknife deigned no reply to such a foolish suggestion.

CHAPTER III

ED AULT GOES VISITING

COREY'S Diamond C brand was one of the landmarks in that part of the country. The ranch, located three miles east of Painted Wells, was a rather picturesque old huddle of adobe buildings under some spreading sycamores.

Milt Corey had never aspired to be a big cattle raiser; he had been content to live along, loving his family and home. Two or three droughts in succession and low prices for beef and hides had depleted his scanty capital, as it had that of many cattlemen in that country.

The banks would lend no more money on that sort of security. Milt Corey had secured the ten thousand dollar mortgage when the market was in good shape, but bad luck had prevented him from paying off any of the principal. Now not only was the mortgage due, but also the note held by Ed Ault for the same amount, due in less than six months. On the day following the funeral Ed Ault rode out to the Corey ranch. Ault was no philanthropist; he was a cold blooded gambler. He rode into the shady patio, watered his horse at the well and tied it to an iron ring in the patio wall.

Mrs. Corey came out on the rear veranda as Ault turned. She was a frail little woman, dressed in rusty black. He came up and leaned against the rail.

"Won't you come up and sit down?" she asked.

"Thank you," replied Ault gravely. "I wasn't sure if I'd be welcome out here."

"There has always been a welcome for anybody here, Mr. Ault."

"I know it, Mrs. Corey. You folks have had hard luck—mighty hard—and I wanted to tell you not to worry about that note."

"I know you mean well, Mr. Ault," said the old lady slowly. "The bank foreclosed today. We have one year to redeem the mortgage, but I don't see how it can be done. If we can't, I suppose the bank will sell the property, take their money and pay you what is left."

Ault nodded thoughtfully.

"Yes, I reckon that's what they'll do."

"One more year," said the old lady softly. "It has been home for a good many years. We've worked hard, and we've been good to everybody. I suppose it is the Lord's will, but it is hard to understand."

"Has Ken got a lawyer yet, Mrs. Corey?"

"Poor Ken. No, he hasn't."

Ault looked at her queerly.

"Can you feel sorry for Ken?"

The old lady lifted her head and looked at him wearily.

"Why, of course. We do not believe Ken did it."

The gambler smiled.

"I hope he can prove that to a jury, Mrs. Corey."

"I feel sure he can. Poor Glad, it was a terrible shock to her."

"Naturally. She's a great girl. You knew how I felt about her. Well, I haven't changed a bit. That attachment I took on Ken's stuff don't mean a thing. I didn't know who else he owed money to; so I figured I'd protect Gladys by putting on the first attachment. When this deal is over I'll turn everything back to her, don't you see?"

"Why should you? It was an honest debt, wasn't it?"

"Certainly it was an honest debt, but it doesn't mean much to me. I've made plenty of money—enough for me. Some of these days I'll sell out and live easy the rest of my life. I'm young yet."

"Yes, you have been successful," said Mrs. Corey.

Elene came out on the veranda, and Ault got quickly to his feet.

"I've wanted to see you and welcome you back," he said rapidly. "How did you like the city?"

Elene shook her head slowly.

"I like Arizona," she said softly.

"And you belong here," he said quickly. "Arizona for Arizonans, eh? The city is all right for city folks, but Arizona is for people who really want to live. City folks never—"

"For goodness sake!" exclaimed Mrs. Corey.

Cornelius Van Avery had stopped inside the patio gate. He was hatless; his shirt was torn in a dozen places and his face scratched. He limped painfully. He was wearing an ornate pair of chaps, a huge pair of Mexican spurs on his fancy boots. His holster flapped empty at his thigh.

Elene got quickly to her feet and went to the top of the steps. Van Avery saw her, reached for the hat he did not have on, and came up to the bottom step, grimacing painfully.

"So this is your home," he said. "Goodness, what a time I've had!"

"Come up and sit down," begged Elene. "Mother, this is Mr. Van Avery."

"Mrs. Corey, the pleasure is mine, I assure you."

"Mr. Van Avery, this is Mr. Ault."

"Oh, yes." Van Avery smiled. "Mr. Ault, how do you do."

"All right," grunted Ault.

"That is fine. I wish I was."

"Didn't you bring your horse?" queried Ault with a trace of sarcasm.

Van Avery attempted to flex his toes inside his boots and grimaced from the pain.

"That horse," he said seriously, "had ideas of his own. The sheriff explained to me just how to get out here; but I suppose he should have let the horse in on the secret."

"Did you fall off?" asked Ault.

"I suppose something like that happened. The real reason is locked in the brain of that yellow horse. You see, he stopped and turned around, intending, no doubt, to return home."

Van Avery turned one heel a trifle and glanced at the wicked looking spur.

"The man who sold me those spurs said they would be great to ride a bronc with. I don't know. Perhaps that wasn't a bronc. I jabbed him just once, and my next jab was in a thorn bush. Since then I've been strolling around looking for this place."

"It's very lucky you wasn't hurt," said Mrs. Corey. "I'll bet your feet are blistered."

"Mrs. Corey," said Van Avery seriously, "I'd amend that to say that I have very little feet on my blister. If there are any unblistered spots on my feet, I don't know where they are."

"Yeah, and if you take off them boots, you won't be able to get 'em on again, I'll bet," said Ault. "I don't know why you tenderfeet ever come out to a man's country. You never listen to any advice; just go blind."

"I beg your pardon," said Van Avery stiffly. "I have no recollection of you or anybody else giving me advice. The only advice I have received was from a man named Hashknife Hartley. He advised me not to carry a gun; but I—darn it, that one is gone now! I suppose it is still in that thorn bush."

"Well, you are going to have those feet taken care of right here and now," declared Mrs. Corey, rising. "Elene, you get that foot tub while I get the cotton and the rest of the stuff."

"I'll warn you now," said Ault, "you'll never be able to get your boots on again until your feet heal. You take my horse and ride him back to town, and tell the stableman to bring it back for me."

"He's not going back to town," declared Mrs. Corey. "Who does he know in town who can fix his feet? You sit down, young man."

Van Avery laughed as he thanked Mrs. Corey.

"Much obliged to you, too, Mr. Ault; but I'm not riding so well today. When you go back, I wish you would tell the stableman about that yellow horse. It is very likely at home by this time."

AULT waited to say goodby to Elene and her mother before he rode away. Elene brought a bootjack, and they managed to get the boots off Van Avery's swollen feet.

"I feel like a perfect fool," complained Van Avery. "Why should you ladies bother with me?"

"You sit still," ordered Mrs. Corey. "My goodness, if you went back to town with those feet! You must have walked miles. Never do that in high heeled boots."

"What would a cowboy have done?" he asked.

Mrs. Corey laughed pleasantly.

"Very few cowboys lose their horses; and they are such poor walkers that they'd prob'ly set down and starve to death. Mr. Van Avery, this is my

daughter, Mrs. Steele."

Van Avery looked up to see Mrs. Steele in the doorway. Elene came past her with the little tub of water.

"Gladys, this is the young man I told you about," she said.

"I'm mighty glad to meet you, Mrs. Steele," said Van Avery, "but I'm also mighty ashamed to have all these blisters."

"Don't mind the blisters," said Mrs. Steele, sitting down on the top step. "If we had nothing worse than a few blisters—"

"That's right." Van Avery nodded seriously. "I talked with Hashknife Hartley this morning about you folks. You remember him, Miss Corey—the tall cowboy on the train?"

"Yes, I remember him. But why should he be interested in us?"

"Oh, I suppose it is because there is so much talk about you. He is looking over the range land for some packing company, I believe."

Mrs. Corey finished doctoring Van Avery's feet, and Elene brought him an old pair of moccasins to wear. He thanked her gravely, then asked how he could get back to Painted Wells.

"You will stay right here," declared the old lady. "No use going back to town. What would you do—sit in a stuffy hotel room until your feet heal?"

"But I couldn't impose upon you folks; really I couldn't, Mrs. Corey."

"You are not imposing on us," said Mrs. Corey. "You sit right here on the porch and rest. It will be good for all of us to have some one to talk with."

"I'm not much to talk with," Van Avery said. "Really, I'm dumb. No, I mean it. Several very learned professors have told me the same thing; a number of well known lawyers have offered to prove that I am dumb, and even my own father has hinted it."

"And now you are willing to admit it," said Mrs. Steele.

"No question about it. But the sensation isn't so terrible. Not having any natural sense, everything I do is in the nature of a discovery. Now, take that horse, for instance. No, I'd rather not. The subject is painful."

Elene laughed as she removed the tub.

"You haven't been shot at lately, have you?" she asked.

"Not since the doctor fixed me up. I remarked that to Hashknife Hartley today, and he told me not to get impatient."

"That Mr. Hartley appears to be a capable sort of a man," remarked Elene.

"He really does, doesn't he? His eyes are so clear and he talks softly. I like Sleepy Stevens, too, but he seems to be laughing at me all the time. He wants me to change my name. My full name is Cornelius Shelton Van Avery. Sleepy said I ought to—let me see, what was the word he used? Oh, yes, dehorn. He said to dehorn both front and back, and make it Blondy Van."

"Your hair is blond," teased Elene. "You could hardly escape a nickname in this country."

"I suppose not; but I don't mind. Now, I've talked too much about myself. That's a bad habit of mine. Gee, my feet feel fine!"

"Was it true that those men robbed you of two thousand dollars?" asked Elene.

"Yes, it was true. At least, two thousand was missing. They overlooked five hundred, luckily for me. Hashknife thinks that those men came over from Porcupine, thinking perhaps I got off the train at Red Hill, saw me get on the stage and later robbed me."

Elene nodded.

"That would account for the fact that they shot you."

"That was a terrible thing to do," said Mrs. Corey. "Elene was sure you were dead. She said they deliberately shot you down."

The talk gradually drifted around to their own troubles, and Van Avery heard a first-hand account of it all. In spite of the evidence against him, none of them believed Ken Steele had shot Milt Corey.

"Ken loved dad," said Gladys miserably. "He'd have done anything for him; and they say he did this."

"Ed Ault was here today, Gladys," said Mrs. Corey.

"I know he was, and that was why I didn't come out."

"He said he attached Ken's property to protect you."

"How in the world would that help Glad?" demanded Elene.

"He explained that he didn't know how many other debts Ken had; so he protected her with the first attachment. He said she could have the property any time she wanted it."

"In plain English, he wants to make Gladys a present of Ken's gambling debts, all nicely canceled," said Elene. "Why?"

"Never look a gift horse in the mouth," said Gladys.

"I'd look that one in the mouth," declared Elene firmly.

"Would you? It doesn't seem to me that we can pick and choose, Elene."

"Listen, honey." Elene went over and put an arm around Mrs. Steele's shoulders. "Ken hasn't been convicted yet. When he is, it will be plenty time for Ed Ault to be offering you presents."

"You haven't any right to say that," flared Mrs. Steele, getting to her feet quickly. "You act as though I had forgotten Ken."

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Elene, "but you know I never liked Ed Ault."

"Because he's a gambler," retorted Mrs. Steele. "Oh, I'm not going to defend Ed Ault. He's nothing to me and never was. If I cared for him in any way, I'd have come out and spoken to him, wouldn't I? I suppose I should hate him for letting Ken run up those gambling debts. But I know they were honest debts, because Ed Ault is an honest gambler."

Mrs. Steele walked into the house, rather defiantly. Mrs. Corey shook her head sadly.

"Well, I'm not alone," said Van Avery thoughtfully.

"What do you mean?" asked Elene curiously.

"I thought I was the only person in the State to make dumb statements," he said seriously. "Honest gambler!"

"DO YOU know where your detective is now?" asked Banty Brayton, digging at the bowl of his old pipe, which seemed to be eternally plugged up.

"I didn't say he was my detective," denied Silver Steele. "I just wondered if he was."

"Uh-huh. Damned pipe! I wish I could git used to smokin' cigarets. Well, he hired a horse and started out to the Corey ranch yesterday, but the horse bucked him off in a manzanita, and he had to walk halfway around the world to find the ranch. Didn't have brains enough to foller a road. Landed at the ranch with his heels all blistered; and he's still out there waitin' for 'em to heal."

"He'd make a good sheriff," observed Handsome. "Lost his gun."

Steele laughed shortly.

"I reckon I was mistaken about who he is. What do you know about these two strange cowboys?"

"Hartley and Stevens?" asked Handsome.

"Yeah. What are they doin' here?"

"Oh, they're workin' for some Eastern packin' outfit, lookin' over new range for their feeders. Jist a couple cowboys, gittin' along."

"How are things up at the mine?" asked the sheriff.

"Better. I clamped down hard. Offered a thousand dollars' reward to any miner who could give me information on who was stealin' higrade ore, and I offered five thousand to any one who could show me how the higraders got rid of their ore."

"I reckon I'll quit bein' a officer and start detectin'," said Handsome.

"You can start right here," said Steele quickly.

"What do you mean?"

"I'll give you five thousand to prove that Ken never killed Milt Corey."

"Steele, I'd do that for nothin', if I was able."

"I know you would. How is Ken?"

"Eatin' three times a day. His wife and her sister came in last evenin' to see him. Want to go in and talk with him?"

Steele shook his head.

"Ken and I parted with some hot words. We were both wrong, and we're both bullheaded. I'm goin' to hire the best criminal lawyer I can find."

"I wonder what Ken done with that ten thousand dollars," said the sheriff.

"You might ask him," suggested Handsome. "I did."

"What did he say?"

"Repeatin' profanity allus hurts my tonsils."

"As a matter of fact, there's only Ken's gun as evidence against him," stated Steele.

"That's all." The sheriff nodded. "But that's a-plenty. It's all wrapped up and locked in the old safe."

The safe in question was a huge old relic, without a combination.

"I'd hate to use a safe like that," said Steele.

"If there was ever anythin' valuable in it, so would I," joked the sheriff.

Hashknife and Sleepy came in, and the sheriff introduced them to Steele. Sleepy wanted to play a game of pool, so Handsome offered to play him, if "spotted" enough to allow him a big advantage. They went away arguing the point, and in a few minutes Steele departed.

The sheriff told Hashknife of the different rewards Steele had offered.

"Why don't he hire a good detective?" asked Hashknife.

"He thinks he has." The sheriff chuckled.

"Van Avery?"

"You heard about Van Avery, didn't you?"

"I heard Ault tell what happened to him. Still out there?"

"I suppose he is."

Hashknife rolled a smoke and sprawled in his chair.

"Was Milt Corey ever interested in minin'?" he asked.

"You've heard about him givin' up the Comanche Chief?"

"Yeah; but I mean later."

"No. Oh, yes, he was once." The sheriff explained, "You see, Rick Nelson found some likely lookin' stuff jist a short distance from Corey's north line fence and sunk a short shaft. Corey found out about it, and located several claims on his own land on his side of the fence. You see, that stopped Nelson from locatin' on Corey's land."

"Could he have done that?"

"Shore, if he could prove it was more valuable for minerals than for grazin'."

"That's right. You see, I'm a cowpuncher, not a miner. Then what happened?"

"Nelson quit—said it was jist a surface showin'. That was two years ago. Nelson's claim lapsed, 'cause he never done his assessment work last year. But Corey did. Corey wasn't no judge of ore, but he hated and suspected Nelson; so he done his assessment work to keep Nelson from ever grabbin' that land."

"What did Nelson think about it?"

"Well, it amused Nelson. He said he'd keep Corey doin' assessment work as long as he lived. It was Nelson's idea of a good joke. I saw the stuff Nelson took out. It assayed a little gold at the surface, but the vein was thin as a hay-fever whisper, and played out complete. Say, I forgot to tell you—it was that prospect hole where that feller Payzant was killed."

"Yeah?" Hashknife inhaled deeply and blew a thin stream of smoke toward the dingy ceiling.

"Payzant was supposed to be a prospector, and he was workin' on a little lead about a mile east of that prospect hole."

"Who found him?" asked Hashknife.

"Couple cowboys from Steele's outfit. Goin' past, they saw a hat on the edge of the hole; so they got off and took a look."

"You say it's on Corey's north line fence, eh?"

"Shore. You ain't goin' in for prospectin', are you, Hartley?"

"Pshaw, I wouldn't know one ore from another. All I know is cows."

"That's me. Ore ain't nothin' but rock to me."

"What about the prospect Payzant was workin' on?" asked Hashknife.

"Didn't amount to anythin'. Nelson said he didn't have any kind of a showin'. I jist wonder if Steele was right about Payzant—I mean about him not drinkin'. He looked as though he had fell in on his head, and there was a whisky bottle, part full, beside him."

"How deep was the hole?"

"Mebbe fifteen feet deep."

"Solid rock bottom?"

"Shore."

"Didn't it strike you that the bottle must have been tough to stand a fall like that?"

"It does now; we never paid no attention at the time. Payzant must have

been dead several days. It shore wasn't a nice job—takin' him out."

"Bury him here?"

"Yeah. The boys chipped in and gave him a decent burial."

HASHKNIFE wandered uptown and found Silver Steele at a general store. Hashknife bought some tobacco, and a little later joined Steele at the hitch-rack, where Steele was loading some stuff in a buckboard.

"The sheriff was telling me a few things about local happenin's," said Hashknife, "and he mentioned a detective named Payzant. I used to know a cowpuncher of that name, and I wondered if he had turned detective. It ain't a common name."

"Might be the same man," said Steele. "This man was of medium size, dark hair—"

"Different man," interrupted Hashknife. "The one I knew was as tall as I am. The sheriff was tellin' me somethin' of how Payzant met his death, and that he didn't know until lately that Payzant was a detective."

"That's right," agreed the big mine owner. "I was payin' a detective agency to furnish me a first class man. They warned me that I would never know who he was until the case was closed. I never suspected this man, who said his name was Jack Cherry. Even after his body was found and buried, I never suspected who he was. That was how he happened to be buried here. It was quite a long time later that a letter came to him, sent in care of me, and the postmaster gave it to me. You see, we never knew where he came from; so I opened this letter, hopin' it would be from some relative, and it was from the detective agency, askin' why he didn't report to them."

"Do you think he was murdered?" asked Hashknife.

"I do. No one ever saw him take a drink, and I believe the bottle was planted there to give the impression he was drunk and fell into the hole."

"The bottle wasn't busted, and the sheriff says the hole was fifteen feet deep," Hashknife affirmed.

"I never thought of that, but it's true."

"This ore stealin' proposition is plumb new to me," said Hashknife. "I can savvy 'em stealin' rich ore; but I'll be danged if I can see how they get the gold out of it and dispose of it."

"That's the problem, Hartley. You show me how it is done, and I'll give you a check for five thousand cold dollars. And here's another chance to make a stake: Find out that my son didn't kill Milt Corey, and I'll give you another five thousand."

Hashknife laughed and shook his head.

"I'm no detective, Mr. Steele."

"That's right. Well, come out and see us, Hartley. Come out to the ranch or out to the mine. You're always welcome."

"Thank you kindly." Hashknife nodded.

Steele drove away.

Hashknife sauntered back along the street to Nelson's hardware store, where he found Dave Bush alone behind the counter.

"Seen anythin' of the darn gun-shootin' tenderfoot lately?" asked Bush, taking a seat on the counter.

"He's out at Corey's place, I reckon," replied Hashknife.

"I hope he stays there. That jigger is positively dangerous."

"Next time don't sell a faulty automatic," advised Hashknife.

"Well, I didn't know it wouldn't stay cocked." Bush laughed. "I was takin' chances, I guess. He bought a Colt .45 revolver from Rick. Damn fool will probably shoot himself with it."

"I wonder if he's as dumb as he acts."

"I'm wonderin' the same thing," replied Bush seriously. "Wasn't he mixed up in some sort of a shootin' deal in Porcupine?"

"I reckon he was. What kind of a place is Porcupine?"

"Saloon and a post office."

"No stores?"

"No. Started in as a minin' town, but failed fast. Nothin' much over there except the X8X cattle outfit, Steve McCord's place."

"Where do they trade—over here?"

"Yeah. We get most of the trade. Steve and Rick are old friends, and we

fill most of their orders. Sometimes they come over after it, and other times we ship it down on a train. Don't amount to much. More of an accommodation than anythin' else."

"No mines workin' now?"

"No, you can't say there is. Steve owns a hole in the ground and a broken down stamp mill. Used to be the Hellbender Minin' Company. I reckon Steve inherited it or won it in a poker game. They did take out some gold at one time, but not any more. The last time I saw Steve, he was talkin' about puttin' a couple men to work, kinda pesticatin' around, lookin' for the lost vein."

"I hear he runs sort of a forked outfit," said Hashknife.

"Well, I suppose they are. You've got to hold your own in a country like this. Steve's only got three men, besides himself and the cook. You ought to meet Steve; he's the kind you'd like to find at the wagon."

Hashknife smiled.

"You've punched cows yourself, eh?"

"Oh, yeah, a little. What made you think that?"

"Mentionin' meetin' him at the wagon," replied Hashknife. "What do you think of this case against young Steele?"

"Pretty bad for him, it looks to me. In the first place, Ken needed money pretty bad. That would prob'ly cover any of us; but findin' his gun near the body, one empty shell and blood on the gun—you see, the old man was beat over the head."

"Ken offer any alibi?"

"Said he was innocent and then shut up like a clam."

A customer came in, and Hashknife sauntered outside. For lack of something better to do, he wandered up to the stage depot, where the stage was loading for the trip down to Red Hill. He sat down on an old bench in front of the office, and in a few minutes Ed Ault and one of his men came over to the stage. Ault was carrying a suitcase and was apparently dressed for traveling.

They stopped near Hashknife, waiting for the loading to finish, and Ault gave his companion detailed orders on running the business during his absence. Ault nodded to Hashknife.

"Takin' a vacation?" asked Hashknife.

"Going to Phoenix for a few days," replied Ault. "Have to get away once in awhile to keep from growin' rusty."

Ault climbed aboard, and the stage was on its dusty way to Red Hill again. Hashknife watched it disappear, then sauntered back down the street. Hashknife did not like Painted Wells; and he did not like the sort of work expected of him. Mining stuff was out of his line. Except for the little, old, white haired Mrs. Corey, he would have wired the Association to select another man for the job, and have gone riding toward the hills again.

Hashknife was queerly sentimental. He did not know Mrs. Corey. He had merely seen her at the funeral. Yet he could not forget that expression of dumb misery on her wrinkled old face as she stood there trying to realize that her lifetime partner was gone, her home to be taken away from her and her daughter's husband facing a murder charge.

"Old folks hadn't ought to suffer," he told himself. "They ain't got nothin' to look forward to—no chance to build up again. I'd always hate myself if I went away and didn't help her. There's one crooked deal been pulled on that outfit, and I've got to see if I've got brains enough to straighten it out. But, Lord, I don't know where to start."

CHAPTER IV

HIGRADERS

AT EIGHT o'clock that evening Sleepy and Handsome were in a small poker game at the Yucca Saloon, and Hashknife was sitting with the sheriff in front of his office, when a team and light wagon came rattling down the street and drew up at the little hitch-rack in front of the sheriff's office.

Elene Corey was driving the team, and with her were Mrs. Corey, Mrs. Steele and Cornelius Van Avery. Both Hashknife and the sheriff realized that this was unusual; but none of the visitors made any explanation until they were inside the office where the others were able to see Van Avery. He had a cut lip; two lower front teeth were missing,

and his light colored shirt seemed to be a smear of gore.

"I'm rather a thight," he said, lisping through the space where he had lost the two teeth.

The three women seemed frightened and nervous, although none of them had been injured.

"We just had to come in," explained Elene nervously. "Mr. Van Avery insisted that he—he must get away from there, and—"

"Jist what in the world happened to you?" queried Hashknife.

Van Avery essayed a weak grin.

"Some one shot through the window," said Mrs. Corey.

"Shot through the window!" ejaculated the sheriff. "Who did, Mrs. Corey?"

The little old lady shook her head.

"We were eating dinner, and—"

"Supper," corrected Mrs. Steele.

"Oh, yeth. I wath eating thoup, and thomebody—Mith Corey, will you tell it, pleath."

Elene suppressed a nervous laugh.

"That lisp may sound funny, but it must be painful to have two perfectly good teeth knocked out by a saltshaker."

"Well, suppose we git down to exactly what happened," suggested the sheriff.

"Some one fired a shot through the window," said Mrs. Corey. "The bullet apparently struck a saltcellar, and the saltcellar struck Blondy—Mr. Van Avery—in the mouth."

"That'th all right." Van Avery grinned. "Call me Blondy. You thee—" turning to the sheriff—"I'm thure thomebody was thootin' at me, and I —I don't with anybody elth to get hurt. That'th why I inthithted on coming back to town tonight."

"And we were afraid to stay out there," added Elene. "That is the whole story."

The sheriff shook his head wonderingly as he looked at the disheveled Van Avery.

"Boy, I don't savvy your luck. That's the third time somebody has tried to kill you. Don'tcha know you're settin' a record for Arizona?"

"I'm not interethted in recordth."

"I don't blame you ladies for bein' scared," said Hashknife. "It was plenty nervy of you to even stop to hitch up a team. I don't reckon I'd have stopped to bother with a horse. Are you goin' to stay here in town tonight?"

"We never thought just what we might do," confessed the white haired lady. "We would be afraid to go back."

"I wouldn't go back there alone for a million dollars," declared Mrs. Steele.

Hashknife and the sheriff looked at each other curiously.

"I don't believe we'd care to stay at the hotel," said Elene.

"I'll tell you what," suggested Hashknife. "I'll go git my pardner, and we'll go out with you—if you'd like to have us. I'm sure there is no danger out there now."

"Would you do that?" asked Elene eagerly.

"Be ready in five minutes. I'll drive your team and let Sleepy take our horses. Blondy, you better hunt up Doc Smedley and have him fix up your lip. He can't do much for the teeth, I'm afraid."

"I gueth not," lisped Van Avery. "I think I thwallowed 'em."

The trip back to the ranch was uneventful. The women had not stopped to clean up the wreck of their interrupted supper. There was the smashed window, scattered dishes, the battered metal saltcellar which had struck Van Avery's teeth. Hashknife found the bullet embedded in the wall.

After an investigation, Hashknife deduced that the bullet had been fired at Van Avery, who sat at the end of the table; but the aim had been low and the bullet had struck the bowl of a heavy soup spoon about three feet from Van Avery. Apparently the bullet had ricocheted, missing Van Avery by several inches.

The bullet was considerably battered, but Hashknife decided that it was a .45-70 caliber. An investigation outside the house satisfied Hashknife that the shooter had been on horseback, as there were no fences or buildings near, and the angle showed conclusively that the bullet had been fired on a downward slant.

All of which was little satisfaction to the three women; but Hashknife finally persuaded them that it was merely an-

other attempt upon the life of Van Avery, and not an attack on them.

THE sheriff came out there early in the morning, but there was nothing for him to investigate. Near a gate just north of the house Hashknife found an empty .45-70 shell which showed no stains of weather.

"The man who fired that shot was on horseback," said Hashknife. "He fired the shot and rode up here before he pumped another shell into the barrel of his gun. Prob'ly stopped his horse and looked back before he headed into the hills."

The sheriff nodded solemnly.

"I'll tell you what I'm goin' to do; I'm goin' back to town and tell Van Avery to git to hell out of this country before somebody kills him."

"I'm afraid he won't go," replied Hashknife. "That kid has been shot once and shot at twice; but he ain't scared yet."

"He's crazy, I tell you."

"No, he ain't crazy—he's nervy. You don't hear him squawkin' about that bullet along his ribs, and he ain't cryin' over bein' robbed. My opinion is that he's stuck on Elene Corey."

"He ain't so dumb," declared Sleepy. "He's jist ignorant. Somebody ought to tell him that a bullet, properly placed, will kill him. Mebbe he thinks that people don't die from nothin' but old age."

They went back to the house, and the sheriff talked with Mrs. Corey. There were cattle and horses to be taken care of, and the sheriff asked her what she intended doing.

"I don't know," she admitted miserably. "We can't afford to hire even one man. There is no market for cattle, and no one wants to buy a horse. What on earth are we going to do?"

"Shore tough," admitted the sheriff. "I don't even know what to advise you to do, Mrs. Corey."

"We are up against a blank wall," sighed the old lady. "I used to think I had lots of courage; but the last few days have taken it all away from me. I just go around in sort of a daze, wondering what will become of us all."

Hashknife fingered his hat thoughtfully and finally looked at the old lady.

"You don't know anythin' about me and my pardner," he said, "but if you're willin' to take us for what we are, we'd like to help you out. Anyway, we could kinda tide you over. We both savvy horses and cows pretty well."

"Well, that's shore generous," said the sheriff quickly.

"You mean you would work for us, with no salary in sight?" asked the old lady wonderingly.

"If you could tolerate us—yes'm."

"We're good cowhands," added Sleepy. "Only thing is, I've got a weakness for hotcakes like you had this mornin'."

"Why, I don't know what to say," said Mrs. Corey. "I—I don't like to say no, and I hate to say yes. It isn't fair to you boys."

"Plenty fair to us," replied Hashknife quickly. "All we ask you to do is quit worryin' so hard. Look at the doughnut, instead of the hole inside it. No use worryin' about the things that might be, 'cause the things that we worry about the most hardly ever happen."

"I reckon that's mighty good advice," said the sheriff, getting to his feet and picking up his hat. "And I'm shore glad these two boys are goin' to help you, Mrs. Corey. Mebbe that's the start of better luck."

As he went down the steps into the patio, Handsome Hartwig, riding a lathered sorrel, came through the gate. It was evident that the little deputy had ridden fast. He slid off his horse and came toward the steps, panting a little.

"There's hell to pay at the Comanche Chief!" he blurted. "Foreman murdered and thirty thousand dollars' worth of gold bars stolen. Steele jist got to town and reported; so I came to git you, Banty."

"They killed Tommy Ryan?" asked the sheriff.

"Too dead to skin. Them bars was run yesterday afternoon. Steele said that Ryan slept in the office last night, guardin' the safe. But they got in on him and blew the safe. Nobody heard it."

"What next?" growled the sheriff. "This country's goin' to the dogs."

Hashknife turned to Sleepy.

"You're punchin' cows for the Corey outfit alone until I git back from the Comanche Chief. I'm goin' to help the sheriff look at a busted safe and make bad guesses how it was done and who did it."

"Hop on to it." Sleepy grinned. "I'll miss you, but it's all right."

BACK in Painted Wells, they found that Steele had taken the coroner along with him; so they hurried on the two miles to the Comanche Chief. Steele met them and took them into the office, where they found Dr. Smedley and the mine assayer—a little man wearing heavy glasses.

Work had been suspended, and a crowd of curious miners loafed around outside the office. Several of them knew the sheriff and deputy. Tommy Ryan had been popular with the men, and they were anxious to find out more about the murder.

No one had touched Ryan's body, which was sprawled beside a cot, the blankets wildly jumbled in a heap on the floor. Ryan's huge body had been powerless against the two bullets, one in his chest, the other through his head.

The safe was a big old-fashioned affair. Its door sagged open. The sheriff and coroner busied themselves with the body but, after a glance, Hashknife turned his attention to the safe. Steele was saying:

"They got sixty ingots, damn their hides! Why, it was a hundred and twenty-five pounds of raw gold that they stole. But I'd have given it gladly, if they had only let poor Tommy live. Here's his gun."

Steele picked up a Colt .38 from the table and held it in his hand.

"They never gave him a chance in the world, the dirty devils!"

Hashknife came from the safe and looked at the gun. It was a double action gun, police model. Hashknife swung the cylinder out and looked at the cartridges. He snapped the gun shut, a thoughtful expression in his eyes as he handed it to the sheriff.

"You'll keep this for evidence, I reckon," he said.

"Evidence?" queried the sheriff. "Why, that was Ryan's gun."

"I'd keep it," said Hashknife, looking the sheriff square in the eye. "You can't afford to overlook anythin' in a deal like this."

"Shore," muttered the sheriff, and he slipped the gun in his pocket.

It did not require much time for the sheriff and coroner to finish their examination. Steele had a number of the miners move the body to Ryan's quarters. A little later Hashknife and the sheriff rode back down toward Painted Wells.

"The hell of it is they didn't leave a dangled clew," complained the sheriff. "It shore was a complete job, to my way of thinkin'."

"What did you think of the blowin' of that safe?" asked Hashknife.

"Well, they shore blowed it, Hartley. Poor Tommy, they never gave him a chance in the world. Too bad he didn't git a chance to do some shootin' himself."

"I don't reckon he could—not even with the chance he had."

"Chance he had?" grunted the sheriff. "What do you mean?"

"Look at that gun you got in your pocket."

Wondering what Hashknife meant, the sheriff looked at the gun.

"Open it," said Hashknife.

The sheriff swung out the cylinder and studied the cartridges. He jerked up his head and looked wonderingly at Hashknife.

"My God!" he exclaimed. "Two of these shells has been—why!"

He turned the cylinder, snapped it into place, lifted the gun above his head and pulled the trigger. There was no report; just the dull click of the hammer.

"Even the primers are dummy," said Hashknife. "They never gave Ryan a ghost of a chance. Can you imagine how he felt when he snapped that gun twice and it wouldn't go off?"

"I never believed in capital punishment," said the sheriff slowly, "but I'd gladly stretch the rope for the man who done this."

The following morning Silver Steele announced the closing of the Comanche Chief for an indefinite period, retaining only Jim Ortelle, the assayer, one shift

boss and two men to act as caretakers. Steele's only explanation was that under present conditions he was unable to operate at a profit.

The closing of the mine was a severe blow to Painted Wells, as Steele's payroll was quite heavy. Especially did it cut off a big revenue to Ed Ault, who was still in Phoenix.

"The worst of it is, we're in the richest stuff we ever had," said Steele to the sheriff. "But I'm not a millionaire; I can't stand losses of thirty thousand at a time. I haven't been makin' any money. Some day I'll operate again, but with an entirely new crew. Every man at the mine now is carryin' a Winchester, and they've got orders to use 'em. Ortelle is virtually in charge, and he picked out a hard crew for any higrader to buck against."

CHAPTER V

VAN AVERY DISAPPEARS

HASHKNIFE and Sleepy plunged into the work at the Diamond C. For two days they were busy repairing and greasing the three old wooden windmills, scattered far apart over the range, shifting a bunch of thirsty cattle from a dry waterhole to where they might get a long delayed drink, butchering veal for consumption at the ranch.

They worked early and late—harder than they had ever worked for wages. Since the death of Milt Corey and the arrest of Ken Steele there had been no one on the job at the Diamond C. On the third day Hashknife rode to town with Elene and her sister. He had never met Ken Steele, and Elene insisted on his going with them to the jail.

They had told Ken about Hashknife and Sleepy volunteering to help them at the ranch, so Ken gave Hashknife a hearty grip through the bars. Ken Steele was a capable looking young man, well built and with a finely shaped head. He did not strike Hashknife as being the type of man who would commit murder.

"I dunno how we're ever goin' to thank you," he said to Hashknife, after he had greeted Elene and his wife affectionately.

"We ain't doin' much," answered Hashknife, "and Ma Corey's meals are plenty pay for us. Sleepy is gettin' hog-fat."

"Don't try to belittle the work you have done," said Elene. "You've done more real work in two days than a dozen paid cowboys would have done. Are they treating you all right, Ken?"

"Oh, I suppose they're doin' the best they can. The prosecutin' attorney was in to visit me yesterday afternoon."

"Did he have anything new to ask?" queried his wife anxiously.

Ken shook his head.

"Nothin' new, dear; he wanted me to confess. He said it would save the taxpayers a lot of money, and he'd see that I merely got life. He said I didn't have a chance in the world, anyway, so I might as well make it easy for everybody."

"As I understand it," said Hashknife, "the only evidence against you is the fact that you knew Ault was to loan that money; that you started home ahead of Mr. Corey, and that your gun apparently was the weapon used."

"That seems to be enough, doesn't it?" asked Ken bitterly. "As a matter of fact, all I did was to act like a weak kneed fool. I owed Ault a lot of money. My wife didn't know it, and I was ashamed to tell her. I came to town the night before, and Ault demanded money. I guess he knew Glad didn't know I owed it; so he threatened to tell her. He had already tried to get my father to pay the bill.

"Anyway, Ault and I had hard words. I didn't go home; I got drunk, and I think I made cracks about shootin' Ault. Mebbe I would have shot him, if the play came up right. Anyway, I kinda remember that somebody took my gun away from me. What there was left of the night, I guess I spent in the stable behind the Yucca Saloon, and it was noon before I woke up, sick as a fool.

"That one night sure cured me of drinkin'. I went down to the livery stable and spent several hours on the stableman's cot. He got me a pot of strong coffee, and that put me on my feet. I went back to the Yucca Saloon,

where I seen Dad Corey at the bar, talkin' with Ed Ault. Ault was countin' out some money. I didn't want Dad to see me; so I took my horse and headed for home.

"I was still sick and disgusted with myself. Just to show you how sick I was that day, I never missed my gun until I was almost home. I didn't remember right then about somebody takin' my gun away from me—that came later. I thought I lost it in the livery stable; so I turned around and started back. But I didn't go far, because I was afraid I'd meet Dad Corey. I decided to go on home, and I did. No one saw me ride in; so they couldn't prove what time I did get there. I went into the bunkhouse and flopped down on a bunk.

"I must have went right to sleep, because that's where the sheriff found me; me there on the bunk, smelling of bad whisky, and my holster empty. I should be here in jail for treatin' my wife the way I did; but God knows I never shot Dad Corey."

Ken's story rang true to Hashknife. It was the first time he had heard any of Ken's side of the story.

"Do you remember who was with you when you said you'd kill Ault?" asked Hashknife.

"No, I don't, Hartley; that's the worst of it."

"No idea who took your gun that night?"

"No. I remember tryin' to find it, and I remember arguin' with somebody about it."

Hashknife turned to Handsome.

"Did you ever try to check up on who was with him that night?"

"Why would I?" asked Handsome. "This is the first time I ever heard Ken tell about it. Doggone him, he ain't talked to anybody until now."

"That's true," said Ken. "I was goin' to keep my mouth shut until I could tell it to a lawyer."

Hashknife walked back into the sheriff's office, leaving the two girls with Ken and Handsome.

"Hello, Hathknife," said a lisping voice.

Hashknife turned to see Van Avery seated against the wall, grinning. He looked funny with those missing teeth.

"Hello," greeted Hashknife, "how are you, Van?"

"Pretty good. Everybody all right at the ranth? I wanted to thee you, and I thaw you coming in awhile ago and—thay, did you ever lothe two teeth? I thound like hell, don't I?"

Hashknife laughed as they walked outside.

"Never mind the teeth."

Van Avery led him away from the office and grew confidential. He had found out that the credit of the Diamond C was badly strained at the general store, and that the bank had started foreclosure proceedings on the Diamond C. It seemed that Van Avery had wired for more funds, had received them by telegraph and had opened an account at the bank.

"You ain't aimin' to stay here, are you?" asked Hashknife.

Van Avery most certainly was. He had been out to the Comanche Chief mine with Silver Steele, inspecting the workings and examining the safe.

"Mithter Thteele was awful kind to me," he said. "I thaw everything there wath to thee, and I had thupper at the ranth."

Hashknife looked at him gravely.

"Listen to me, kid," he said seriously. "You're cuttin' a tombstone for yourself and you don't realize it. Silver Steele thinks you are a detective in disguise, sent here to find out who is responsible for stealin' his valuable gold ore. He had one in here awhile back, and he was murdered. They smashed in his head and threw him into a hole. That's why somebody has been tryin' to kill you. Now, have a little sense and get out of here before it's too late."

Van Avery looked blankly at Hashknife.

"That thertainly ith funny," he said.

"It may be funny to you, but it ain't a damn bit funny to me," said Hashknife. "You're a nice kid and you mean well; but this gang of murderin' thieves will git you shore, like they got Payzant and Ryan."

"I wath at the inquetht," said Van Avery simply.

"Yeah, and the first thing you know you'll be the main character in another

one."

"I bought another gun," said Van Avery. "I've lost two already."

Hashknife shook his head sadly and held out his hand to Van Avery.

"Good luck," he said seriously. "If you won't use brains, you'll have to depend on luck."

HASHKNIFE left him in front of the store and went back to meet the two girls at the buckboard. Van Avery had gone into the store.

"Wasn't that Mr. Van Avery?" asked Elene.

"The Arizona target," amended Hashknife as they got into the buckboard.

"You don't like him?" asked Elene.

"I never said that, Miss Corey."

"I wish he'd come out to the ranch," said Gladys. "He is the most amusing person I ever saw."

"Dumb," declared Hashknife.

"I think he is a nice boy," stated Elene. "He may have queer ideas of things, but it is because he doesn't understand. He doesn't claim to be brilliant."

Back at the ranch Hashknife told Ken's story to Sleepy, who was repairing a broken place in the corral fence.

"Sounds reasonable," admitted Sleepy. "I had a long talk with Ma Corey, and I tell you they're up against it hard. Would you believe it, they ain't got *no* money at all. Unless somethin' breaks, they'll be on a straight diet of beef."

Sleepy threw the hatchet outside the corral and hitched up his belt.

"This is the first time I ever cursed the lack of money," he said. "She's as nice a old lady as I ever knowed. Don't squawk. She says that the Lord will provide. I said, 'Yeah, that's all right, but—' What's this comin' our way, Hashknife?"

It was apparently a heavy wagon drawn by four horses, with two men on the seat. Hashknife shaded his eyes and watched them come in at the big gate.

"Big an' li'l fishes!" muttered Sleepy. "That's Cornelius!"

Hashknife got a good look at the load of provisions and turned to Sleepy.

"The Lord has provided," he said dryly. "He worked through an agent, but here it is."

They walked back to the corral and watched the driver start to unload. Van Avery entered the house; in a few minutes he came out with the three women. After a brief conversation he walked down to the corral. There was a queer expression in his eyes, and he did not speak to the two cowboys. Sleepy was whittling on the top pole of the corral, paying no attention to the young man who leaned against the corral fence.

"You'd think I did thomething," Van Avery finally muttered.

Hashknife reached over and put a hand on his shoulder.

"Van, I take back everythin' I ever said or thought about you."

"I—I juth wanted to replath the thalt I thpilled—and it grew to a wagon load," he said slowly. "Darn it, I with I had a couple of good teeth. I thound like a four-year-old."

"You sound like a hell of a big man to me," said Hashknife seriously. "And I'm bettin' Ma Corey thinks the same."

Van Avery nodded, a little shamefaced.

"I gueth tho. I wonder if it would be thafe for me to thay to thupper?"

"Damn right!" blurted Sleepy. "We'll set outside and shoot every damn person that comes close. You ain't got nothin' else to do; so why don'tcha stay out here and help us run the ranch?"

"I gueth I better not; you'd be thafer with me in town."

Elene approached, and the conversation stopped. Hashknife looked meaningly at Sleepy, and the two cowboys drifted quickly around to the stable, leaving Elene and Van Avery together.

Ten minutes later Van Avery joined Hashknife and Sleepy. Elene went back to the house.

"How are you?" asked Sleepy, for want of something better to say.

"I'm thad," replied Van Avery.

"What makes you sad, pardner?"

"You'd be thad too, if you tried to be therious with two teeth out."

Van Avery wouldn't stay for supper. He insisted that he must go back to Painted Wells; so Sleepy took him back in the buckboard. He did not reenter

the house before leaving, and Hashknife wondered what had happened. He found Elene in the patio and told her that Van Avery had gone back to town.

Elene turned away for several moments; when she looked at Hashknife again her eyes were filled with tears.

"It was all my fault." She choked, halfway between laughing and crying. "He—he was serious, and I laughed. Oh, I shall never forgive myself."

She wiped away her tears and started for the porch.

"Mind tellin' me about it?" asked Hashknife. "Mebbe we can fix it up."

"I'm afraid not," she replied. "You see, he proposed to me—kinda. He—he said, 'I'm going to marry you if thomebody don't thoot me too thoon'."

Hashknife turned toward the gate.

"No, I don't reckon I'd be any help," he said. "Don't you worry. If he don't come back, he ain't worth your answer."

"But I don't want to marry anybody," Elene said.

"That's fine; I'll tell him."

"You don't need to bother yourself," she said curtly.

Hashknife chuckled softly to himself on his way down to the stable to feed the horses.

THE next morning Elene asked Hashknife to take her to town. She was perfectly frank about it.

"I want to apologize to Mr. Van Avery," she said. "Neither mother nor Glad know why he went away yesterday without saying a word to them; I want him to know I'm sorry for laughing."

But they did not find Van Avery in Painted Wells. The proprietor of the hotel said that Van Avery had not slept there during the night. His stuff was still in the room, the rent of which was paid for a week. Neither the sheriff nor the deputy was able to tell where he had gone.

"I seen him about seven o'clock," said Handsome. "He was settin' on the loafers' bench on the sidewalk in front of the hotel."

Silver Steele was in town, so Hashknife questioned him, thinking that Van Avery might have gone out to the JS ranch. But Steele had not seen him for two days.

Hashknife was frankly worried about Van Avery.

He talked with Sheriff Brayton, who was of the opinion that the men who had tried to shoot Van Avery had lured him out of town with the intention of putting him out of the way.

Investigation proved that he did not go away on the stage, and a search of his room disclosed that fact that he did not wear his big hat, boots or chaps. On the table were his cartridge belt and empty holster; he had vanished in his city clothes.

"I'll see what I can do toward findin' him," said the sheriff, as they went back to the street. "But I'm scared they've got him this time."

TO BE CONTINUED

A Bigger and Better Adventure!

Please remember that the size of ADVENTURE is to be enlarged beginning with the next issue. It will appear once a month, and sell at 15¢.

The same high quality fiction by your own favorite authors—but much more of it! And better than ever. Watch for the June issue!

SONG IN MAHRATTI

By PERRY ADAMS

"AH, SAHIB," said the subahdar-major, as we tried to cool ourselves in the hot, sticky breeze, "the winds before the monsoon always make me a little sad." He sighed. "Yes, they recall a curious period through which I once passed; I should not care for another like it!"

In the dim light of a single oil lamp at the other end of the long room, he was a blur beside me. We sat quite alone near the door of the regimental mess, gazing out into the velvety blackness which surrounded us—the intense, expectant darkness of an Indian night. Overhead light clouds raced across the stars, skirmishers and advance guards of the coming rains; and below, thirsty nature prepared for the onslaught in a busy hush which one felt rather than heard. The battalion had marched for the frontier these many days, to join the brigade at Dera Ismail Khan. As a very green junior subaltern I had been left behind in charge of the depot, while the subahdar-major had not gone because of a foot infection.

Almost nightly I invited this fine old son of a fighting race to join me in the mess after dinner. The glory and pride of the Mahrattas was reflected in his high caste Hindu face, molded by generations whose courage was a byword when Christ walked the earth.

When the British came to India the untamed Mahratta spirit flamed out against them in three bloody, costly wars. "We have beaten the Mahratta army, but we have not conquered this people," said the great Duke of Wellington, as his army paused to lick its wounds after the battle of Assaye. But in the end the Mahratta kingdom bowed to the inevitable and swung under the English banner.

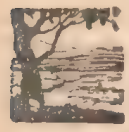
Although he had never been out of India, the subahdar-major was a man of the world, with a broad, sympathetic understanding of Western ideas. Like so many of the better type Indian officer, he had absorbed the essence with the form in his hard climb up the ladder, without in the least losing the proud reserve of his Eastern individuality. Without resentment toward the British Raj, he was able to reflect upon the conflicts of his people, the decline and the decay of Mahratta power, the prodigal waste

and the splendid, barbaric futility of the past.

Looking back dispassionately, he permitted himself to be aware of the gradual diminution of British prestige in India since the World War. This he felt with a keen sense of regret; for he had no illusions, born of fanaticism, that the peoples of the Indian continent were now ready, by some magic stroke of national alchemy, to weld themselves into one homogeneous whole. And he searched in vain to the utmost corners of his mind to discover any nation which might, with equal success, replace the British in India. In short, he approved of the British—not blindly, because his ancestors had served under them, but in spite of that.

I liked his ideas, his outlook. At times I doubted, had our positions been reversed, whether I would have been big enough to have his clear conception of the Indian scene—that is, of course, clear in the sense of what a newly joined junior subaltern believed was the right conception for an Indian officer to have. I was just the least bit proud of myself for being sufficiently mature to make that delicate distinction.

Always I found him interesting, whether his talk was theoretical or factual. Tonight I felt that he had a story to tell. He spoke English so well that he was hardly ever hampered in his choice of words. There was a dreamy quality in his voice, a low tone which portended a chapter from his life. I supplied him with a cigar and a long glass of ginger ale, which he sipped.



"THE winds that bring the rain," he began, presently, "the hot winds from the south. Already it is raining in Ceylon, I think."

He leaned forward in his chair, as if he saw a picture on the sable curtain of the night.

"The winds blow, the rain comes, and the regiment goes on. Always the regiment goes on. For nearly one hundred years it has been so; a long time? Just an instant, just a breath, while you and I sit talking here. I grow older, and presently you will grow older. Then others will come to wear the Star of Mahrattaland. It is our destiny, and theirs. Yet who truly knows when he is old? I am older than you, sahib, yet here our minds meet. And what does age matter? Perhaps age is measured by our fears—the sick fears we hide deep in our breasts."

I laughed. I was thinking of the rows of ribbons on his broad chest, headed by the Indian Order of Merit. The picture of the subahdar-major nursing a sick fear simply would not take shape in my mind.

"What do you know of sick fears?" I asked, much amused.

"Ah," he answered seriously, "you laugh at this old man! You don't believe me, eh? But, yes, sahib, I have known fear—a fear I could not control, for it was fear for another. Was it the less real because of that? No, far worse, I tell you! I was a senior havildar when this began. I already knew something of the outward ways of sahibs. I was just at the point where I had begun to study their minds a little; for I was not satisfied, as were so many of our people, to accept the strange things they did, merely because they were foreigners and Christians. I wanted to know why they did them! You see, just then I was hopefully awaiting the lord viceroy's commission to jemadar and I wished to have a better understanding of those above me.

"It was in the Winter of 1916 that a certain sahib came to us, a transfer from a battalion of the King's Royal Rifles which was fighting fiercely in France. The colonel sahib posted him to my company which then, as now, was the Dekkani company of the regiment."

"I had not known you were of the Dekkan," I murmured.

"*Hán, ji,* I am of the south. You would have known had you been with us longer, because my name, Krishna Lal, is of the south. But that is of no importance.

"So the new sahib came to my company, and the next day colonel sahib held a durbar and the Indian officers and havildars were presented to him. His name was Jurgiss sahib. Afterward he came to C Company orderly room and sat in the chair while the daily petty crimes were tried; for Webster sahib, our

company commander, was away. This new officer could speak no Hindustani and, of course, no Mahratti, so he spoke in English to the senior Indian officer, Subahdar Jeswant Rao.

"What he said was doubtless of no great moment, but you can be sure we watched him, as we always watch sahibs when they come to us, not knowing what manner of men they may be. He sat there, observing, as each case came up, Jeswant Rao translating sometimes and conferring with him on penalties out of deference; for, truly, this stranger could not be expected to understand the business of company orderly room in an Indian regiment.

"He had a fine, open face and a ready smile, and he handled himself like a soldier of experience in little things. Trust soldiers to look for that! But his eyes never smiled. Often when he thought himself alone there was a hunted look in them, as if he sought to escape some heavy burden which weighed on his soul. Again and again I saw this look, and wondered. But I said nothing. He played games well and soon began to learn Hindustani.

"Indeed, we of C Company were glad to have him with us and were congratulating ourselves, when the first ugly rumors began to drift out of the bazaar. How do such rumors start? Whence do they come? Big wheels turn little wheels, and little wheels turn smaller ones. There were men in the bazaar who had been in France with the Indian Corps—men badly wounded or shell-shocked or physically unfit. By devious ways did these rumors come from them? How else!

"Like smoke imprisoned in a house, the rumors spread throughout the regiment, until the men even had a marching song about this thing. You have heard one man sing on the march, then the others join in the chorus? When you learn to speak Mahratti you will understand these narrative verses, sung to some well known tune.

"The verses about Jurgiss sahib were colored with all the rough barrack-room expressions which the men pick up. Of course, we would stop it when we heard them sing. But they sang it! There was no proof that the talk was true; yet as time went on this ugly thing somehow gained ground until it would not down. I was told that the sahibs knew of it as well, although the men took care never to sing the new verses when any sahib who spoke Mahratti fluently was along. So, without a word or an action to merit it, Jurgiss sahib sank into disfavor.

"Naturally I had listened to the talk, had heard the song. I wished not to believe, for I liked him. But from all quarters the story was repeated, again and again. In time, repetition is a dangerous thing. I thought so often of the look in his eyes that one day, instead of saying to myself, 'It is not true,' I found myself wondering, 'Can it be true?' So the doubt had crept into my mind, else I could not have asked myself the question.

"At this time the lord viceroy saw fit to commission me a jemadar, and for awhile I was too busy with my new duties to give much thought to Jurgiss sahib. But, because of my promotion, I was thrown more closely with him than ever. And now occurred one of those inscrutable things which confuse the soul: Jurgiss sahib saved my life!

"It was a simple thing in itself, but it affected me profoundly. The regiment was on a route march. At the second halt we found ourselves beside the ruins of an old building, and I seated myself on the remains of a wall. During the ten-minute rest Jurgiss sahib walked slowly up and down the road, smoking his pipe. We were about to fall in again and, for the moment, I had lost sight of him, when I felt a stunning blow on my left hand. As I sprang to my feet I half turned to behold Jurgiss sahib standing behind me, shaking like a leaf.

"I looked at the ground and saw a dead *kryt* close to the spot where my hand had been. The sahib was so upset by having killed the snake with his boot that perforce he sat down to recover, although he soon stood up again. The blow from his boot had broken two small bones in my hand and, as it was beginning to swell, he bound it up with his handkerchief. His own hands trembled as he did so.

"No sooner were we again on the

march, than some troubadour far down the line began, in a high voice, to sing a new verse about Jurgiss sahib and the snake; the gist of it was that even so small a thing as the *kryt* caused him to get weak knees. The song was stopped at once, but not before jeers and laughter rippled down the length of the column. The sahib understood no word of this, which was well.

"I owed him my life, since a *kryt* bite is always fatal to our people. I was deeply in his debt; and yet the way he had acted did not make it easier to answer the question which I now involuntarily asked myself whenever I thought of him. We Mahrattas do not forget; we pay our debts. I owed him life itself.

"By killing the *kryt* he had destroyed the ordinary relationship between a sahib and an Indian officer of his company, for my creed bound me to pay him back in kind. But the debt was to a man I suspected unworthy of wearing the uniform. I now suspected it in spite of myself!"

AS IF to emphasize his words, the oil lamp at the other end of the mess sputtered fitfully and went out. A blur before, the subahdar-major vanished completely. Somewhere nearby a frog croaked, deeply bass; at once a host of treble croaks answered him. I noticed this idly, as his voice came again to me out of the darkness—a voice without a body, a thought put to sound:

"I brooded over it, for it touched something deep within me, and I was young. Suppose, I thought, the opportunity comes to save this man's life as he saved mine; should I do it? Am I not in honor bound to do it? But then, is my own honor greater than the honor of the regiment? For if this man is a coward, does he deserve to be saved? Then I wondered, if the opportunity never came, whether I must forever consider myself in his debt? And I decided that I must. It was unnatural and unsoldierly.

"I cursed myself and—yes, I cursed him as well—him, my benefactor. I prayed for the chance of action so that I might rid my mind of it.

"At last the finger of chance pointed the way. For long we Dekkani Mahrattas had known a man of our people, Govind Chand by name, who, born Kshatriya like ourselves, and of our own village, had foresworn all right to his soldier caste to become an outlaw and a thief, a raper and a pillager. About him were assembled those who fled from justice—desperate men like himself—whom he had organized with great efficiency, for he had had military training before he ran amuck.

"With the cunning of the hunted, he had escaped the police times without number. Never was man more elusive; at times a few of his large band would be cut off and captured, but Govind Chand himself was a will-o'-the-wisp. Many times we discussed his deeds among ourselves; and there were those who openly wondered why, if the police were powerless to subdue him, the Raj did not send troops to end the nuisance for all time. While his crimes had been against our own people rather than the sahibs, we felt it was but a question of time before they, too, would feel his rapacious hand.

"Such men are inflamed by continued success to the point where they lose all sense of the power of the Raj. And at last, truly, he overstepped himself in terrible fashion. By sôme devious underground agency, Govind Chand became aware that there was a large shipment of rifles on the military railway siding near Belgaum.

"This was far afield, even for him, since none of the band had ever been seen so far north—no, not within fifty miles of that spot—and the rifles were strongly guarded by British troops. But in spite of this, here was temptation which must have outweighed every thought of caution. Rifles—the tools of his trade—as necessary for him, almost, as the air he breathed. Many rifles! Who knows but that in his crazed brain, he may have had a delusion of grandeur, may have seen himself as a second Sivaji, bloodily sweeping all foes before him up to the very throne itself?

"Without warning, in the middle of the night, he noiselessly swooped down on the siding. Not a shot was fired. To a man, the guard met death by the

sword, or rather by the short, curved tulwar which these people knew so well how to use. There was no chance for resistance; the sentries were met and dispatched one by one, while those asleep in the guard tent never wakened again. The vans were looted and not a rifle remained. No need to wonder who had done this thing. The audacity of it could be the work of only one man!

"News travels quickly among the Indian people—sometimes more rapidly than by telephone or telegraph. By night all India must have known; and we wondered what the Raj would do now? There was great excitement in the cantonment. The regiment buzzed with talk of it; in my company, among the men who had grown up with Govind Chand, we speculated on how many hours it would be before troops were ordered out. Certainly this was no police matter! British soldiers had been murdered and many rifles stolen. This was a direct and horrible crime against the Raj itself, and much face had been lost. All India was watching."

A SOUND of marching feet broke the thread of the narrative. It was only a guard party changing sentries, for it was ten o'clock. The footsteps presently stopped. There came a low word of command, "Sentries pass", followed by two sharp clicks of boot heels coming together as the old sentry moved out and the new one took his place. Then receding footsteps, and silence. At this moment, I thought, how many hundreds of sentries are being changed, all over India! A simple act, but a symbol of power.

"Yes," continued the subahdar-major, "at this moment the eyes of all were upon the Raj—sly and cunning eyes, scornful eyes and anxious eyes. The lord viceroy himself must act, and quickly. Rumors flew about our lines like gnats.

"At noon the brigadier sahib came to our orderly room; and presently he and colonel sahib drove away together. In C Company we now believed it probable that we might be chosen to take the field against Govind Chand—for, although every Mahratta regiment has a Dekkani company, ours was recruited largely from his own village and most of us knew him well, as I have said.

"Our belief was confirmed the following morning, when C Company was ordered to mobilize for active service, to leave that night. The order was: 'Secure the person of Govind Chand, dead or alive.' As many as possible of his followers were to be captured or killed, but it was made clear that this was of minor importance. Webster sahib, our company commander, seemed delighted over the opportunity. He was as pleased as a boy and made sly Mahratti jokes with us Indian officers; for he spoke the Mahratti tongue better even than colonel sahib.

"Jurgiss sahib I saw only for a moment that day, but it was said that he looked sullen and unhappy. As I prepared my clothing and equipment with the others, I was glad that the time might be at hand when my debt could be discharged. But immediately I felt less glad when I heard the others discussing the possibility of the sahib's showing fear in action. Until he came, it had never entered our minds that a sahib could be afraid. It had been outside our experience. The old ideas persist!

"The same hot, sticky wind which blows now was blowing then. And, just as tonight, I remember thinking that it must already be raining in Ceylon, far to the south. It seemed certain that our small war would be waged in the rain; and this is not a pleasant thing in hill fighting. Back jumped my mind to Jurgiss sahib. And because of my mixed feelings, I did not wholly relish the work ahead. My thoughts raced over all the situation as the monsoon wind blew on my clammy forehead.

"That night our band played us to the station, with sepoys from other companies running along beside us with flares. All the sahibs of the cantonment were there, and Webster sahib, who must have been toasted very much in mess, was just the least bit tipsy. Just before we entrained I caught a glimpse of Jurgiss sahib. His face looked white, but it may have been the uncertain light in the train shed. The train began to move; a great shout went up—

" 'They're off!'

"Ah, what soldier does not thrill at such a moment?

"IT BEGAN to rain during the journey — the incessant rain of the monsoon. Our train carried us deep into the Dekkan; the rails skirted the base of the foothills which Govind Chand knew so well. We detrained in open country on a shelving cinder embankment, down which the company slid to assemble in the mud. We marched soggily; by dusk we were in the hills. Pickets were posted and no fires were lighted. We slept under bivouac tents, wet and tired.

"At dawn we were on the march. Webster sahib called us four Indian officers to the head of the column, where we discussed information, which Subahdar Jeswant Rao had brought back from leave, as to Govind Chand's most recent stronghold. Jeswant Rao said that *shikaris* from his village had reported Govind Chand in a heavily fortified *sangar*, some thirty miles southeast of our present position. But this was before the rifle raid. We doubted whether he would dare return there.

"At the noon food halt we discussed the best plan; for neither police nor secret service, we learned from Webster sahib, had been able to offer information late enough to be of any value. It was a most difficult situation."

I interrupted him—

"Why on earth didn't they send in the air force and save all that blind man's buff?"

"Ah, yes, the flying boats, as we then called them! There were no airplanes available in the Southern Command, I think, in 1916. Does it not seem strange? At Rissalpur, near Nowshera, they had begun to form an air station, but it was very small then; and, being far away in the Northern Command, was not, I suppose, considered near enough to be of value. It would all be different now.

"But at that time we had been given certain orders, and ours was the responsibility to execute them as best we could. That day we marched some twelve miles over a faintly marked trail which wound through the hills. Good distances are never made when a body of men must march in single file.

"The going was rough; but at the end of the day we reached a high plateau, good for camping. Still no plan had been made; but Webster sahib decided to send Jeswant Rao with a scouting party of five to Govind Chand's last reported position, on the small chance that they might be able to pick up some information. Shortly after the evening meal the party set out.

"That night we slept with a feeling of security, for ours was the highest ground about and sniping seemed almost impossible. But in spite of this, a sad thing happened the next afternoon. Webster sahib set out to inspect our transport lines, only a few paces away. He was walking along in the rain, talking to Jurgiss sahib, when a single shot rang out. We still could hear its echoes when we saw Webster sahib stagger, half turn, then fall heavily on his back. The bullet was perfectly centered in his forehead.

"Without an order from Jurgiss sahib, who stood transfixed beside the fallen body, the company sprang to arms. We searched, reckless of cover, until darkness forced us to return to the plateau. We found nothing. It was Govind Chand's declaration of war.

"We buried Webster sahib, in the rainy darkness, at one corner of the plateau. We laid him with his feet to the east; you see, he was almost one of us. Over the grave we built a high cairn of stones; no jackal or prowling wild dog would get at him. There was no ceremony or firing party. Along with Jurgiss sahib, we Indian officers dug with entrenching tools—deep enough, deep enough."

The subahdar-major sighed. Something fine and bright and shining had passed out of their lives that night: The spirit of an English gentleman, a leader with the common touch, who could make sly little jokes with them in their own language. And here they were, barely started on an expedition fraught with difficulty and danger, grimly burying their leader in the rain. Among them worked a man whose courage they questioned, who must assume the difficult leadership which they believed him ill fitted to carry on. Bad enough if they alone held these opinions; but the rank

and file also shared them. Without a spoken word, they must have felt that from now on theirs was the real responsibility.

"Later I lay in the shelter with the other jemadar," continued the subahdar-major, after a long pause. "The wind howled and the rain descended upon me from a spot I had touched by accident on the low, sloping canvas. My companion snored. How could he sleep like that, after what we had just done? But then, he always was a man without imagination, and he was not obligated to Jurgiss sahib. Such hours as those are when a man searches his soul. I arose at dawn, weary and unrefreshed.

"Jeswant Rao was due back, but he did not come All day we waited, until at dusk Jurgiss sahib called us to him. It was agreed that we should await Jeswant Rao until the next dawn, then push forward. 'For,' said the sahib, with good logic, 'if he is not here by morning, who knows that he will ever come?' In the light of what had taken place, we now suspected that Govind Chand must have been aware of our presence almost from the start. It was a case of the stalker stalked!

"THAT night I must have dozed; I was very tired. How long I slept I do not know—perhaps two hours. But I awoke, sitting straight up, with the feeling that something was wrong.

" 'Are you awake?' I whispered to my companion.

"There was no answer. I got to my knees and leaned over; I shook him. There was no response; he did not move. As I ran my hand over his body I felt something sticky. I reached back for my flashlight, found it and played it on him. Quickly I felt his pulse. There was no pulse. His hand and his whole body were warm, but I knew in that instant that he would never wake again. A few seconds later the whole company was roused. We searched all around the plateau, but found nothing.

"Jurgiss sahib seemed fearfully upset. He called me to his tent. I could add nothing to the bare statement that the jemadar had been stabbed, for I had heard nothing.

" 'My God!' he cried. 'This dirty, hole-in-the-corner business will kill us all, if we stay here long enough!'

"We were quite alone and, without thinking, I said something which overstepped the bounds of discipline.

" 'Above all men, sahib, you must not be afraid now!' I whispered—and knew at once that this was not a thing for an Indian officer to say to a sahib.

"But was it not a natural thing to say? He stiffened and seemed to hesitate for a moment.

" 'You do not understand, Krishna Lal,' he said, finally. 'Nobody understands. I know what they must have been thinking and saying ever since I came to India. Oh, yes; don't think I suffer under the delusion that a man's past record doesn't follow him. I know! In France the big guns pounded into my brain until I could stand no more. I could no longer control myself. It was beyond me.

" 'It got so that even when the guns were silent, the thought of them would send me into a cold sweat of horror. I lost hold of myself. Well, there are no big guns here; but something is gone inside me. It's as though I had broken faith with myself. And so I live in hourly dread of being afraid. It is not fear for myself; I am not afraid to die. But you do not believe?'

"He must have remarked a look of wonder on my face. What did I know, then, of the things that drove men mad on the Western Front! How could I realize that tens of thousands of brave men, who had gone out there in the full power of manhood, had been made driveling idiots by the horrors of war? I was ignorant, and young.

"To me, a man either was brave, or not. There was no middle ground which he might choose, or rather, be forced upon, by elements of which I knew nothing. So what could I reply? I told him that the idea was new to me, that I wanted to believe whatever he said. And then, in my halting English, I tried to make clear the debt I owed him. I do not think he understood me fully, any more than I understood him. I mean, we grasped the words, but the impulses from which they sprang were obscured by the huge differences in our back-

grounds.

"But the attempted confidences had established some new sort of bond between us. At the end we shook hands in the darkness; and afterward the sahib put his hand on my shoulder, just as dawn found us.

"None of Jeswant Rao's party returned, so we broke camp and pushed on. Progress was slow, for we feared an ambush. Jeswant Rao had given us a marked map of Govind Chand's supposed location. This we approached by a prearranged route, still hoping to pick up Jeswant Rao as we marched. It was bad, this hunting a man who, we had reason to believe, watched our every move."

TO THE rear of the mess, in the cook's godown, began a loud altercation, punctuated by an intermittent bombardment of pots and pans. Presently, from the tones, I judged the crisis approached. There was a momentary lull, followed by a hollow boom, as though the father of all pots had fallen, or been pushed, to the floor. Then a door slammed and a stream of shrill curses marked some one's exit from there.

Unconsciously, the subahdar-major pitched his voice slightly higher.

"I will not weary you, sahib, with our day by day progress. It is sufficient that we advanced into that country and found Govind Chand's abandoned stronghold. From the first we had not believed it would be otherwise. There were no signs of Jeswant Rao. He and his party had vanished completely. We were sniped at during the day and harried by phantom prowlers at night. Our remaining subahdar was mortally stabbed while inspecting a night picket, which left the command to Jurgiss sahib and myself.

"I could sense that the strain of waiting for the unexpected was wearing him very thin. He so dreaded to appear afraid that every action was colored by what he felt that I and the rest might be thinking of him. Never for an instant was this unfortunate sahib able to forget himself.

"We were getting beyond the high hills, always with the uneasy knowledge that Govind Chand's people were all about us, when we had our first sight of the hunted one himself. We had been doing all our marching by day, since all thought of concealment had long been out of the question. Just before dusk the rain almost stopped and the sun shone behind the clouds. In that peculiar, greenish gold light of late afternoon, we suddenly saw a large body of men winding between some low hills ahead. The company was brought up at the double and soon every rifle and our four Lewis guns were blazing away. But the range was great and our fire was not very effective.

"I trained my glasses on the point in the hills through which they were passing and saw a man dressed all in red, sitting on a horse, urging the others to greater speed. Jurgiss sahib was also using his glasses.

" 'Look,' I cried, 'the man in red—do you see him? It is Govind Chand!'

" 'Tell the gunners a hundred rupees to the man who hits him!'

"I passed on the word, and all four guns were trained on him. The men were wildly excited. Drum after drum was fired, but the light was fading fast. Through our glasses we saw a few fall, then the last of the men disappeared through the fold in the hills. But Govind Chand sat motionless, as though disdaining our fire. Finally, with a defiant wave of his hand, he, too, vanished. It would have been folly to pursue him in the darkness, so we made camp.

"After the evening meal the men sang for the first time since we set out. We had seen him! Now to come to grips with him. We had been out twenty days. Nothing so discourages troops as an invisible enemy slyly pegging away at them, without ever giving a chance for revenge.

"Seasoned as the company was, the men were getting jumpy; our casualties numbered one British and three Indian officers and, roughly, fifteen or twenty other ranks. You understand that the wounded had to have a covering party to take them back to railhead, so that we had lost around fifty of our strength which, at the beginning, had been about two hundred, with some sixty mule *drabbis* in the transport. The only estimate

we could make of Govind Chand's strength was by a count of the party we had seen in the hills; they numbered three hundred.

"Out of the hills the next day, we made twenty miles. We were now deep in the south of the Dekkan, in country mapped as a great swampland, stretching hundreds of miles in all directions. We reached the edge of the swamp on the second day. There had been no sniping and no night stalking by Govind Chand's men since the contact made with them in the hills.

"We sent parties out to the east and west, in an effort to learn which way he had turned. It seemed almost hopeless, but presently the eastern party returned to report unmistakable signs of his progress. When we reached the spot, Jurgiss sahib and I did not at first agree as to what the signs indicated.

"It was evident that the party had stopped here for some time, because the soft ground was matted down by countless footprints. Then a large group had moved off toward the east, keeping close to the edge of the swamp. Many trees had been hacked down, and in one place, where scrub vines grew, a quantity of them had been cut out. I tested the tendrils of the vines and found them to be very long, and strong enough to serve as crude lashings.

"Jurgiss sahib thought that Govind Chand had paused to make stretchers for his wounded, and had then moved off to the east. I pointed out that such a man would not bother with wounded and that the trees used were too big for stretchers. I told him I thought a number of rafts had been built, on which Govind Chand and a picked group had embarked; that the marks of the party moving off to the east was a false scent. Had he wished to move off to the east himself, he had only to backtrack a short distance from the edge of the swamp to place himself on hard, firm ground, where his tracks would have been almost impossible to follow.

" 'If this is so,' said he, 'there will be the marks of these rafts having been dragged to the water's edge and launched.'

"We searched and almost at once discovered such marks. Jurgiss sahib seemed to shiver.

" 'Then we must build rafts and follow.' He drew the map from his haversack. 'But look—there are no islands marked in the swamp. It would take him weeks to pole to the other side, even if the water were shallow enough for poles all the way!' He closed the map quickly, for the rain beat upon it.

" 'I have thought of that, sahib,' I assured him. 'He would also starve to death before he could pole across. But this map has been made, I feel certain, by compass bearings only. The Raj did not send men into the swamp to make the map, but was satisfied to mark its borders. Do you think that, without a goal in sight, so wily a man as Govind Chand would trust himself to these waters? I look for an island stronghold, unmapped, but well known to him, where he believes himself able to withstand any siege.'

"He agreed that my theory seemed possible. A raft was made and tested in the water with the weight of six men. It grew dark, and that night we made our plan. There were to be fifteen rafts, each to carry six men, with two weeks' supplies. The balance of the company was to remain at the edge of the swamp to form a guard for transport. Two of the Lewis guns were left with them. If they heard nothing from us at the end of seventeen days, they were to make their way back to the railway as best they could.

"DOES the plan sound unmilitary? Of course it was! But what else could we do? On that vast expanse of water, where reed grass grew to the height of a man's head, it was impossible to see more than fifty feet in any direction. Did this grass exist all over the swamp? How did we know? Would the water get too deep for our poles to touch bottom? If so, we believed it would also have been too deep for his, and there we would not venture. What was to be our direction?

"Curiously, this same swamp grass which so obscured our vision marked our route. For there was in the company a young sepoy of the most famous *shikari* family in the Dekkan. I am ashamed to say that I had forgotten his peculiar

ability until the havildar of his platoon reminded me of it. The eyes of this man were so trained that he could mark the passage of any object through the swamp grass by signs invisible to us.

"At last the rafts were made and tested; all details were completed. In the early morning light of another rainy day the rafts moved off at short intervals, in single file. Jurgiss sahib and I were on the first one, with a havildar, two sepoys and the *shikari*, who lay, eyes close to the water, sighting out the way. He stoutly maintained that the passage was clear, that the signs were all about us; but we could see nothing.

"We traveled this way for a week, with the small service tents pitched on each raft for shelter, for the rain never ceased. By night the rafts were brought together and moored by lashing the long grass to their sides.

"I began to have a feeling of unreality, as if the rest of life were a dream. This was the only real thing—the everlasting, silent poling, with the faint shock each time the polers reached the end of the stroke; the quiet lapping of the waters against the raft; and the hiss of the rain among the reeds, which scratched faintly along the raft as we proceeded. There was no sense of time, no feeling of direction, for the outlook was unchanging. Even the cries of a flock of gulls, which followed us for the bits of food which the men threw away, at last became part of the monotony.

"At night, closely packed in the shelter tents, we slept fitfully, with only the sound of the rain in this watery wilderness. The sahib and I took our turns as lookouts, along with the men. And nothing, not the slightest thing, came to break this feeling of being alone in a world of reeds and water, through which we had silently crawled since the beginning of time.

"But on the eighth day two things happened. Our rafts began to settle in the water until they were awash to a depth of an inch. The spongy swamp wood was becoming waterlogged. The added discomfort was the least of it; we wondered how long it might be until we sank altogether. And then the reeds began to thin out, until our *shikari* sepoy could mark the way only with the greatest difficulty. That night the sahib had chills, and by morning he was burning with fever. We carried on, but very slowly, for the rafts were growing heavier and our route was no longer clear. At last the *shikari* stood up and said—

"'I can not see the way!'

"The reeds had thinned to almost nothing; and they were short—mere spearheads in a great inland sea, stretching to the south. As I looked about me in the rain, sorely perplexed, all at once I thought I saw something, off to the west, which made me catch my breath.

"'Quick!' I said to the *shikari*, 'look yonder and tell me what you see?'

"'It is land,' he said simply.

"But even as I asked the question, I was unstrapping my glasses from their soggy case. The sahib was on his feet beside me, glasses in hand. We saw a small island with a rocky shore. Men moved about on it. There could be no doubt: This was our goal.

"The sahib forgot his fever; he was pounding me on the back. Word had been passed back. The air was electric with excitement. In an instant the spirits of the men rose; for here was an end to the long period of uncertainty. At least we would not be drowned. Forgotten were muscles cramped by inaction. With difficulty we restrained the men from standing up for, as yet, there was no sign on the island that we had been observed.

"With new heart, we poled rapidly back over our route, until we were once again hidden by the reeds. I kept my glasses trained on the island as long as possible, as did the sahib. We felt certain they had not seen us. We gathered all the rafts around ours and our plans were quickly made known. We would move on the island at nightfall, timing our arrival late enough so that many might be asleep. The rafts were to be poled in open order, in line, so that we should all land at about the same instant. Twenty men were detailed to search out Govind Chand in person. No quarter was to be given.

"We did not dare to do any preliminary scouting. It was too dangerous. Surprise meant everything. Besides, how much longer would the rafts support us? They were slowly settling.

Throughout the rest of the day the sahib trembled as one with the palsy, whether from the fever, or excitement, or his mental malady—or all three—I know not. We talked very little, as I was busy going from raft to raft, inspecting rifles, ammunition and equipment.

"The men laughed good-naturedly as I slipped on the logs. Later, the rain ceased for the first time—a break in the monsoon. We took it as a good omen. The clouds scurried away, leaving a deepening blue sky, and we saw the sun at last.

"Just as the light began to fail, a meal was eaten. The men fixed bayonets, and all poles were freshly muffled. The rafts moved up into line and the word to advance was quietly passed along. Now we were poling forward in utter silence, each raft keeping its alignment from the one on the right. Ours was at the right of the line.

"ONCE on that strange journey, the sahib leaned close to me and whispered:

" 'This is my day, Krishna Lal. Tonight is mine!'

"But I paid scant attention, for I was thinking of what lay ahead.

"As we came under the shadow of the island the stillness was so marked that we could hear little waves lapping the shore. And then, unexpected in its suddenness, a light at our backs danced across the dark waters. Immediately, as if jerked up on the string of some evil genie bent on our destruction, a huge full moon floated into the sky, turning night into day.

"To our right, not twenty feet away, a tall man stood on a raft, his pole dangling, gazing at the moon. It was Govind Chand! The sahib, I think, saw him in that first revealing second. No time to ponder why he was there. There he was!

"The sahib was dressed only in shorts; his upper body was bare, save for his Sam Browne belt to which was strapped his revolver. He gave a sort of sigh. I shall always think he said, 'Now!' as he dived.

"Govind Chand must have heard the small sounds of our approach, but doubtless thought they came from the island. At the sound of the splash he turned toward us in a flash. Amazed, he looked at us blankly, just as the sahib's head and shoulders shot from the water beside him.

"The sahib grasped his legs and swept him off the raft; then they were struggling in the water, as we hastened toward the spot. Almost at once they sank in a spume of raging foam, a berserk mass of tangled humanity.

"And I? I stood transfixed with horror, for the time had come to make good my debt, and I could not swim! I was helpless as a child. I lost all sense of time.

"Huge bubbles came rising to the surface as that fierce struggle continued under the water. I forgot I was a soldier; I was buried in the shameful misery of impotence.

"All at once there were two distinct thuds and the water over them rose up in a round dome. And then they came floating to the surface, the sahib moving one hand faintly, while with the other he held Govind Chand by the hair of his head.

"We pulled them on the raft. Govind Chand was breathing his last.

"I leaned over the sahib. He opened his eyes and smiled in faint triumph.

" 'I did it,' he whispered weakly, 'I shot him—down there!'

"He moved his hand painfully to his chest, where ugly knife wounds stained his white skin. Blood poured from his mouth. It was the end.

"Ah, I had failed him. It was too late now! Why had not one of us shot from the raft? At that distance, with that target, we could not have missed. But it was so sudden! Did the sahib think of shooting before he dived? Or did he feel his vindication must be a personal thing—something he did with his own hands? Perhaps he thought nothing short of that was enough to show us he was unafraid.

"Yes, the verses would be different now; men would sing of him as they marched, but we would no longer have to stop their song. It was better that my debt remained unpaid; for a brave man came into his own, and is forever at peace with himself and the world."

Alias Blackbeard

By JAMES W. BENNETT

THE addition of the word "beard" to an adjective of color seems to form a nickname ranging from the opprobrious to the sinister. Thus we have the slurring phrase, "Old Graybeard", the fantastic "Bluebeard", the blood-chilling "Red Beards"—meaning that vicious army of bandits today devastating Manchuria.

But of all the bearded gentry of fact or fancy, history records one who beggars adequate description. This was Edward Teach, *alias* Blackbeard.

He was so named because of a beaver or brush which adorned his face—a beard of such noble proportions that he twisted it into pigtails and tied them with ribbons. Above this hirsute adornment gleamed a pair of malignant, bloodshot eyes peering from under a beetling forehead. The disquieting effect was heightened by his habit of sticking lighted fuses under his tricorn hat, so that his face appeared framed in an unholy halo.

Edward Teach, a native of England, was the most ferocious of that motley collection of pirates who infested the Caribbean during the early years of the 18th Century.

His malignity extended, queerly enough, to the members of his own crew. When times were dull and no fat merchantmen were in the offing, he had the habit of enlivening existence aboard his ship. Stalking the deck, he laid about him with a cutlass, shouting rare delighted oaths as the blood spurted from some luckless seaman's legs.

On one occasion, Blackbeard sought to lessen the tedium of waiting for quarry, by an excursion into practical metaphysics. He filled the hold of his vessel with pots of sulphur—used to hurl aboard a merchantman to asphyxiate its crew. He battened down all but one of the hatches. Through this last hatch, he drove his select company of corsairs. Then—and here speaks the whimsy of the man—he joined his crew in the hold, drawing after him that final hatch. One by one, he set fire to the various receptacles, called, in the blunt idiom of the day, "stink pots".

Soon the hold was dappled with the reflection of those ungodly sulphurous flames, and the foul smoke poured forth.

"Now," shouted Teach, "this will give you a taste of what you are all going to get in the after life. I am making us a little hell of our own."

For a time the coughing, cursing, retching men were afraid to move, fearful of those quick triggered pistols that Teach carried. But soon they decided that they might just as well die by a bullet as be gassed to death. They made a bolt for that one hatch which was not screwed down from above. Teach watched them run, a sardonic smile half hidden by his black beard. He did not, however, lift a hand to his weapons.

At last the crew stood on deck, breathing in gulps the sweet, pure air. Teach remained below. The pirates looked at one another in growing dismay. Was their leader bent on suicide? They called down to him, but he made no answer. Cordially as they hated him, he was their presiding genius.

After what seemed an interminable time, he appeared. His face was drained

of color. He staggered drunkenly, but his eyes were gleaming and his mouth an indomitable slit. He made no comment, but his arrogance was overwhelming. His attitude said, plainer than words, that his crew was a poor cowardly lot, that for him even the fires of hell had no terror.

His death came as he would have preferred it. He had so harried the islands of the Lesser Antilles that a reward of a hundred livres was posted by the lieutenant-governor of Virginia for Teach's capture, dead or alive. In the hope of participating in this reward one of his men turned traitor. He informed Lieutenant Maynard of his Majesty's ship *Pearl*, where Teach might be found.

Maynard set sail at once. At dawn, the next day, he discovered the pirate craft anchored in a little bay, just off one of the smaller islands. Teach had fought several successful naval engagements and he viewed the approach of the British sloop without misgivings.

As the sloop rubbed against the frowsy pirate craft, Teach and his cutthroats promptly sprang aboard the enemy's ship. This was the signal for Maynard to disclose his strength. The boatswain's pipe shrilled. Sailors and marines swarmed out of the hold, outnumbering the pirates two to one. The corsairs, however, were accustomed to battling against odds, and a fight followed that must have been classic. Quarter was neither given nor asked.

Teach ran with great leaps toward Maynard, who stood on the quarterdeck, resplendent in the uniform of a lieutenant of the royal navy. Each man drew a pistol and fired at the same instant.

Despite his usual uncanny ability as a marksman, Teach missed. Maynard's bullet struck him in the face, ripping his cheek. Blood began to drip from the pirate's braided beard.

At close quarters now, the two adversaries drew their cutlasses. Teach soon caused Maynard to give ground. He was not as skilful with this weapon as was the officer, but he gained the advantage by reason of his daring and his great, brute strength.

Above the din of battle, he shouted that he intended to hack Maynard's soul from his body—an unusual act of surgery, to say the least. Over the deck they fought, stumbling and slipping in pools of blood, Maynard grudgingly giving ground.

At last Teach loosed a tremendous blow. Maynard parried it, but its force broke the English officer's sword at the hilt.

This was Blackbeard's moment. If he could dispatch the warship's captain, victory would be his, the enemy's morale shattered. Drawing a deep breath, he raised his cutlass. With admirable courage, Maynard awaited the end. The blow fell—but fell short, although it severed the fingers of the officer's sword hand cleanly at the palm.

But, as Teach was engaged in delivering this intended lethal coup, a British marine, free for the moment, promptly hacked at him from behind. The blow all but severed Teach's head from the neck.

Yet he did not fall. Instead he turned and struck down the marine, instantly killing the man. He was ringed around by a dozen British sailors, each a powerful and doughty fighter, but he held them at bay. Panting, shouting like a maddened, gored bull, he piled the dead around him. His cutlass dripped with his own spurting blood as well as that of the foe. The muscles of his neck had been cut, so that his head lolled forward. But on he fought, his lips bared in a grimace too ghastly to be called a smile. The English began to mutter fearfully that this was no man; here was a demon who could not be killed.

At last he staggered. Fumbling in his belt, he drew a pistol and pointed it at Maynard. But before Teach could fire, the pistol dropped from his grasp. With a crash, he pitched forward, to lie among the piled bodies of the men he had slain.

Blackbeard, master pirate, man of many grim humors, was no more.

When a Man Belongs

By RAYMOND S. SPEARS

Author of "Down The Old Mississipp'"

WAYNE GILBERT drew his final pay envelop from the cashier of the Wurden Manufactures, Inc, and turned down Slip Street toward the Ohio River. The shops were shut down indefinitely. Since boyhood—even during school vacations—he had worked there, in office, yard, bench, shipping and sales. A prosaic and enthusiastic handy man, he had never even considered the contingency of the establishment's drawing its fires and having all the machines covered with thick petrolatum against moisture and canvased against dust to await another period of profitable operations.

Yet in the back of his head Gilbert had always felt the allure of the Ohio River flowing by, a spiritual voice constantly calling to him. Heretofore he had thought of a vacation, a picnic, a cruise down the flood when he should have a motor yacht supported by a not improbable interest in the Wurden business, and an assistant to carry on in the shops for him while he lazed in the luxury of a Spring or Autumn afloat.

The possibility that a day might come when he would have to go down the Ohio with no background of resources to guarantee his sustenance had never occurred to him till the notice was posted that gave the employees two weeks in which to "prepare for readjustments." Now he had in mind a climate to fit his old clothes; but he was perturbed by the questions of food supply. His serene confidence had already come to disaster and he could never again overcome the vague dread of impending difficulty, the uncertainty of life's footing.

Nevertheless, he methodically surveyed conditions. He must fight! A river rat came to the eddy in a tiny shack-scow, and Gilbert, whose favorite walk was along the waterfront, enjoying adventures of the imagination, met him at the bank.

"Want to buy a boat, mister?" the tripper asked, and that clicked with the townsman's condition.

Cautiously the two bargained. Finally for $22.50 Wayne Gilbert owned a shantyboat twenty feet long, four feet six inches wide, having a twenty-eight-

inch deep hull—sound bottom and top and sides tight. With it came a combination heater-cooker stove to burn wood or soft coal, a good cot, cedar bough mattress, cooking utensils, mooring and anchor lines, a mudhook, an ax and, in fact, all but the "personal prop'ty", for which Gilbert naturally substituted his own belongings.

"I'm always a great hand to have a trotline on board a boat," the seller declared. "I'm going up the bank a spell, er I'd hold that out! Take it; it and them staging hooks are a hongry man's dependence."

He indicated a thick coil of white cord, such as Gilbert had sometimes used on special shipments requiring extra pains in wrapping. The purchaser had so many other things on his mind that his memory merely filed the remark for future reference. An up-the-banker, an ignorant town man, the softpaw had everything to learn about tripping the river. For more than a week he slept on board his craft; the Widow Gades, with whom he had long boarded, taught him elementary cooking—pancakes, hot bread, vegetables, coffee, frying and roasting, fruit sauces. She gave him baking powder, flour, breakfast food and recipes. He bought a cook book.

No yacht, this tiny shantyboat; but when it was cut loose and shoved across the upper eddy into the main Ohio current it was the only home Wayne Gilbert had. He watched the little group of friends who had come to bid him good luck. He felt a sudden tightening of his breath as he realized that his life's certainty had faded. His resources were now but a shimmering dream, unformed, strange and untested. He left nothing behind but good wishes, and what was ahead of him he could not even guess.

"Trippin' is jes' cuttin' loose," the river rat had said. "Yo' tie in er anchor, accordin'. Run out a *long* mudhook cable; south and west winds are bad—liable to tear yo' up! Don't hurry. Stop along; if yo' git seasick in the stomach, walk around up the bank. Softpaw, hit'll seem lonesome till some day, all of a sudden, yo'll be a clay-lined riveh rat!"

Gilbert made short jumps, watched sharp for a job, but he didn't find anything practical to which he could tie his mind. An indoor worker, he couldn't find a machine to run, or blueprints to follow, or even day labor to earn six bits. Darkies did all the manual tasks. Corn, cotton and logging were there—jobs that were all shut down or laying off men.

Down in the middle of nowhere Wayne Gilbert began to notice how little grub he had on board. He was pretty fat. His clothes were tight. He was feeling better than ever before in his life! Days slipped away in rare content.

Suddenly the flour was gone, bacon was down to the rinds, sugar was getting sparing, and he was measuring his coffee in scantier scoops so it would go farther—and presently he was warming up lots of things the second time, saving scraps. His money had gone fast at first, but now he was careful, not buying any extras, not even newspapers at five cents.

The river was wide, deep, lonesome.

HIS mouth watered for wild geese flying by, but he had no rifle or money with which to buy one, no ammunition, no shooting experience. When he went up the bank and cast a hungry eye at razorback hogs in the brakes they seemed to know what was on his mind for they looked him over, glanced into his worried countenance and turned to fade swiftly into the cane.

"Why, I'm ignorant!" he thought, watching a man going up in a skiff with the scrawny wings of two wild geese sprawled over the stern of his boat.

Pride mingled with Gilbert's dismay.

Hunger loomed in the blue of the distance, in the falling shadows of night, and the wind around his cabin talked of his diminishing meals; in the dark he lay awake wondering what he could do. He asked negroes and up-the-bankers over the levee; none of them knew how a man could earn a little money. The tripper went up one side and down the other on Mendova's main street. Everywhere local men and help were being laid off; strangers weren't being hired.

Finally he strode down the grade to Front street and cast off his lines to float on farther into the Lower River where every one said it was worse and worse, the farther behind a man left

the Jumping Off Place.

Gilbert was sure that couldn't be true; if he stayed in Mendova he would become desperate—do *something!* Below, around Hopeless Point, out of sight of town, he felt less lonely, more at home in the dire wilderness of brake and spread of flooding water; also he wouldn't be robbing a store or breaking into a restaurant!

He scraped his lard can; he shook out his flour bag; he emptied his cornmeal box. Luckily he had lots of salt—a good pound! The baking powder was all right, and by heating his saved bacon rinds he gave his cornmeal flour flapjacks a tasty flavor.

Eating his last meal, not knowing where the next meal would come from, gave Wayne Gilbert an odd sensation. A man needed more than two pounds of grub a day, even lazing on a shantyboat. This was sixty-odd pounds a month—a new realization, part of the galloping strides of his experience and information! He shoved back from the table with a feeling of relief that the final meal had not come the week before!

Lacking oil for his lamp, without candles, or open firelight, he had eaten before dark. Moored to a sandbar miles from anywhere, even from timber brakes, though willows grew on the towhead, he went ashore and walked along the strand, looking at the jetsam line of sticks, cans, empty bottles, condemned fruit; dead ducks that had been wounded and escaped, becoming prey for insects and vultures. He found a chunk of Arkansas turkey—a slab of pickled salt pork two feet long, six inches wide and two inches thick; it lay on the sand.

Standing beside the white chunk of leached, crinkly meat, he gazed at it. Dusk was at hand. He looked over his shoulder, made sure no one was watching, then picked up the hunk of sowbelly. When he stooped he had reached the low ebb of experience. When he walked back toward his boat now in the gloaming, his feet shuffled and in all his years no such dejection ever had come to him. The Mississippi River had broken him to scavenging.

In the morning he sliced the meat without trimming it; he fried it on the drift fire of his stove; a cold pancake from the previous day's breakfast—which he had tried to forget—and the salt pork lard with crisp fried salt hog meat comprised a meal that astonished him. That afternoon he ate three slices of fried salt pork and a handful of hickory nuts he had found during the day.

That night he twisted a rag and stuck it into a cupful of pork grease and lighted it. Sitting inert by its light, he noticed that coil of trotline hanging in the corner. Then the words of the river man who had sold him this outfit flocked down from their perch in his memory:

"I'm always a great hand to have a trotline on board a boat. I'm going up the bank er I'd hold that out. Take it, it and them staging hooks are a hongry man's dependence."

"Them staging hooks?" Gilbert now had his mind freshened by hunger. He dragged out a box of junk from under the bed, and there were what seemed to be a tangle of lines about nine inches long and on the end of each, come to look, was a fishhook, whipped with stout black linen thread well tarred. The hooks were nearly three inches long. There were scores of them.

"Why," the softpaw gasped, "that's so—fish!"

He never had been any hand to fish. Now he tried to remember or invent his needs; he had wrapped many packages of metal things and he knew knots that did not slip—two half hitches around the white cord, and a bight on the staging. He tied thirty hooks at intervals of five feet on the trotline, put a railroad coupling pin on the end, impaled a little cube of salt pork or a shred of tried out bacon rind on each of the hooks. Then, dropping down the river crossing in the dark, he sank the string of hooks on the trotline in the dead eddy downstream in a chute, stretching it on the river bottom in five to fifteen feet of water.

In the coil-end of the trotline beyond the hooks he tied another iron sinker, keeping the free end of the tackle on his boat. He anchored right there in the chute, after having been working two or three hours by his grease light and floating out of the shallow landing into this more favorable water, a mile or two

down the reach.

Then he went to bed and promptly to sleep. An odd serenity filled his dozing moments. Dreams assailed him —things to eat that were luscious and tempting were all around him but they were winged; the roast beef, whole roast pigs, pans of sausage and huge potpies with wild goose drumsticks poking up through the crusts startled him, but escaped his efforts to seize them.

Odd tremors ran through the craft. He felt the motions of minor earthquakes. He heard strange sounds that awakened him, and he went out on the stern deck to look around; but a few faint stars of the first magnitude were shining in the thick dark. Flying by were migrant hosts, high wild fowl and lower chirruping birds, voices raining on the river as the flocks poured by in the night. Wavelets, audible in the quiet, were thudding against the sides of the boat, shaking it.

IN THE morning he built a fire, crawled back into bed to wait for the cabin to heat up and presently stood gazing at the greatly diminished slab of pork. He was sorry he had cut it up for bait. He felt as if he had wasted good meat which he was surely going to need. He could have put on a hundred, two hundred hooks; but thirty had been enough on which to squander good pork.

He went out on the bow deck, started to take up the slack rope trotline, hesitated and went back into the cabin. He dreaded to know that he had been foolish. How could an ignorant man catch fish, not knowing the way to cast a line or where to seek his victims? He went out three times, and three times he could not bring himself to make sure of his helplessness and ignorance.

But when finally he pulled in the near sinker, untied it and laid it aside, he felt in the freed trotline strange little tremors and, when he had taken up the slack, he felt a pronounced throb and twitch which increased as he dragged in the cord.

Suddenly under the bow rake he saw emerging a long, blackish form squirming and surging in the yellow water. When he heaved again he lifted out of the swirling water the ugly face of a catfish in mirthless grin. Hauling hand over hand in trembling, gasping haste, he dragged the creature up over the bumper on to the deck, where it flopped and pitched about, shaking the whole boat. Anxiously he slugged the fish above the eyes, and it subsided in tragic gasps.

Then he hauled in against the weight still overside on his trotline, and already there was another fish visible on the next hook, one even larger than the first. A third, a fourth—more and more he dragged aboard of those little monsters of the muddy deeps. He had to pull them in on to the floor of his cabin. When at last he had the coupling pin anchor on board he stood gulping and swallowing with emotion as his victims, which he had stopped killing in his haste, surged and flopped about, raising their upper jaws and staring at him, the hull logy with their weight.

Not knowing about live weight, he could not even guess the pounds of his catch, but he had seen big catfish hung up in fish markets and dimly remembered that they were sold at so much a pound. But what teased him was that if he ate even three pounds a day he couldn't eat all those scoundrels in less than three or four months, at least. By that time—he had to grin to himself—he would be sick of fish!

Hoisting his anchor, he floated off downstream to seek the advice of some river man or up-the-banker at a landing. Fortune was with him that day; the stars, he reflected, must be shining right for him. He saw a shantyboat at the foot of the next bend an hour or so downstream, and in it was a fisherman—a hoop-netter. He asked sharply where the fish were caught. Gilbert told him.

"Reckon yo're a softpaw." The man nodded. "Yo' ain't no right fishin' where somebody else owns a reach er bend, claimin' it. But nobody's up theh in that reach, so it's all right. My name's Kirby."

"I never was in such a predicament," Gilbert said, and told how low he had fallen, eating pickled pork off a sandbar.

"I know how that is," Kirby said. "Lots of people is too particular to begin with, an' not particular enough when

they get down to grubbin'. But yo' got a nice catch. We betteh get out them hooks an' untangle the line. Jes' yo' take off them stagings an' coil up the white line. I'll show yo' how to git the hooks out with this disgorger."

"I'll be a thousand times obliged to you!" Gilbert said.

"Ev'rybody needs he'p sometimes," the fisherman said. "What happened, yo' struck a migration of them cats. Yo' betteh git back up, soon's yo' peddled them fish that's daid oveh the levee to the darkies. I'll take cyar of yo' live ones in my box, marked, an' I'll sell 'em when the fish tug comes in this ev'ing. Don't neveh kill yo' fish! Not fo' market."

On his scales Kirby took the weight of the dead fish, marking them on the flat heads. Then Gilbert staggered back inland through the brake, over the levee into the plantations. He had eighty-odd pounds of fish on his back, and he loved the weight of them, rejoicing in the burden. He bargained with the darkies, all according to Kirby's expert advice. Gilbert had to have two darkies help him bring back his trade-ins: two bushels of ear-corn, two gallons of molasses, five live hens and a rooster, a bag of flour, a waterpail full of eggs, mostly brown, and some old brass junk.

Kirby had a bill of sale and eleven dollars in cash for him.

"The woman's cooked up dinner—all we had's a couple ducks, but they're big canvasbacks, an' ain't so bad," Kirby said. "I'd 'a' waited fo' the chickens er whatsevers, but yo' betteh let me tow yo' back up to the chute an' run out yo' anchor line full length this time. Yo' sho' caught on good. Old Mississipp' favors softpaws thataway, sometimes, if they's right an' reasonable 'bout things."

They sat down to roast ducks, brown gravy, hot bread, wild grape jelly, hickory nut frosting cake, coffee, condensed cream—just stuff like that, Mrs. Kirby being kind of ashamed to ask anybody to sit down to such orneries. 'Course, she would admit, it was filling. Then Kirby towed Gilbert's little boat back up and appreciated being paid two dollars for it. At the same time he helped put down the trotline again, shaping the baits right, getting the line crosswise to the migration—little things like that. They fried a chicken for supper, for luck, using pork grease for crisping.

" 'Course, pork'll do," Kirby said, "but these yeah doughgod baits is betteh the way my wife works the batter into strings on the cotton. An' I don't know how she does hit. She cain't tell yo'—er won't. A wife gits so she ain't takin' no chances of gittin' herse'f so she ain't indispensable—not down Old Mississipp', she ain't. She'll make 'em fo' yo' reg'lar. She sure 'preciated gittin' paid for these! Don't neveh waste Arkansaw turkey on them fish. Hit's too good tastin' fo' humans, yas, suh!"

Kirby swung off down the river. Wayne Gilbert watched him go in the thickening of the fast falling twilight. An odd, gripping and overwhelming complacency dominated the reflections of the tripper. He noticed he was relaxed, that he rolled a little to the swing of the boat in the groundswells of the river's pulse.

A tremendous satisfaction was in his being; he listened to the voices of Old Mississipp', felt the melody of the vast flood upon which he hung at anchor without fear, without anxiety, sure of the morrow and of the days and time to come; overnight, terrible fear and privation had somehow yielded to serenity of usefulness, fitness and unimaginable joy on the threshold of the great mystery of the future. Never had he known anything like it.

Somehow he was aware of the ending of the terror and the struggle, the fierce needlessness of conflict and despair; in the great bitterness of strange and crushing ignorance he had somehow found in his own memory the weapon that utterly defeated his metaphysical antagonist. Standing there in the gray and enveloping obscurity misting upon the waters and over the Bottoms, pride gradually gave way to the splendid humility of realization.

"Why," he gasped, "I'm a clay-lined river man! I belong!"

The dream of his years, looking down the Ohio, longing to trip away on the beautiful current, had at last come true.

And now he deserved it!

The Commodore Retires

By A. L. SPELLMEYER

COMMODORE OWENS ran the most unusual saloon ever known in the West. After ten years of survival as a two-gun artist in the days of Dodge City, and twenty afterward as a deputy U. S. marshal from the time of Billy the Kid to the end of the Tonto War, he sought retirement and peace.

In a hamlet used by cattle and sheep men as a supply point and shipping station, his saloon never locked its front door. It was a one-man operation, for the doughty ex-marshal had his living room behind the front apartment that contained the bar.

The walls were hung with guns and other lethal weapons, and under the one window of the living room was the kennel of the great gray lobo wolf that was the pet of the Commodore.

The beverages offered were a variety in either rye, bourbon, scotch or brandy, served straight from the bottle. No pay was collected then, for the custom was in bulk limited to those who understood the somewhat irascible and austere warrior. At the end of the month, or when so inclined, Owens would tell a patron the amount of his bill. It varied as to need or his disposition, but was always paid promptly.

A pleasant form of greeting to a new man was the placing of a bottle of whisky and two glasses on the bar, and beside them two sixshooters, butts toward the customer and muzzles toward the Commodore.

Owens would then say to the surprised patron—

"Take your choice and I will take what is left."

Like the old gray wolf he was, the Commodore knew that men he had killed were survived by sons and relatives, who would be glad to kill him.

One bitterly cold night a shivering hobo asked to warm himself in the corner by the stove. Paddy Burke, a railroad man and regular patron of the Commodore, came in soon afterward.

The first drink down, Paddy walked toward the stove to warm his hands and noticed that the hobo was very stiff and silent in his chair, and was about to remark that he must be dead.

Just then the Commodore, at the far end of the bar, set forth a fresh bottle and called out—

"The house is going to buy a drink."

Paddy walked over to the bar and poured his, when the Commodore again said—

"The house is buying."

Paddy said—

"Commodore, I bet you a barrel of whisky you can't make that fellow drink."

Without looking at the hobo, the Commodore answered, "Taken." He then turned and said—

"Here, you, come and get a drink."

When no reply resulted he strode over to the stove, seized the man by the hair and tilted the bottle into his mouth. When it was a third gone he came back and showed it to Paddy, who remarked—

"You win."

"Isn't the man dead?" asked Paddy.

"Yes," answered the Commodore. "And I knew it when he did not come running the first holler."

Commodore Owens cashed in to his final accounting a few years later, old and gaunt, but still erect, and with speed of hand and a keen, cold eye. If he knew the defeat of age, he never recognized it or capitulated.

By the Author of "White Falcon" and "The Crusades"

Beginning

The GOLDEN HORDE

By HAROLD LAMB

THE Winter's blanket of snow lay deep on the land. It stretched from the frozen tundras down to the southern sea—down to the shallow, tideless gray water of the Sea Gate.

Here clear skies and a warm sun melted the snow. Reed bordered lakes overflowed into the alleys of the Gate itself. And lines of galleys jostled like feeding dogs along the embankment of the caravan road. Out of these galleys swarmed men of all kinds—warriors striding under their gear and slaves bent under hemp sacks—to the bank where sable-clad merchants argued in many tongues and riders in wolfskins spattered them with mud, unheeded. The jangling bells of mules echoed the grunting of lines of camels kneeling for their loads.

For this Sea Gate, as the newcomers called it, was the port of Tana. To the north and east of it stretched a new and limitless empire, an empire ruled by horsemen and filled with unknown treasures. The caravan road that began at Tana went by thousand-mile stages into the heart of Cathay.

To Cathay where, in this year of the Leopard in the second cycle of his reign, the great Khan Kublai ruled all the Hordes.

MARDI DOBRO sniffed the morning air with relish and went down to the waterfront to begin his day's work. Being a *shaman,* he lived by his wits. He knew the tricks of conjuring and telling omens; he was an old hand at making or unmaking spells and writing prayers for the sick to swallow.

In his soiled red robe, with a white bearskin pulled over his high shoulders, Mardi Dobro pushed through the tumult to a dry spot by a fire. His green eyes, framed in the tangle of his long black hair, seemed to take no notice of the men around him as he knelt and picked a glowing ember from the fire.

"*Ai-ha!*" The watchers breathed ex-

pectantly.

Without haste the *shaman* placed the ember on a bone, the cleaned shoulder bone of a sheep. As the ember scorched the bone, tiny cracks appeared around it.

"O lord of omens," some one asked, "what do the signs foretell?"

From the tangle of his hair, Mardi Dobro had been watching the crowd that gathered as usual to the omen-telling.

"Great powers are arising, unseen," he muttered, and waited.

"Against whom?" asked the questioner.

Mardi Dobro glanced at him and saw only a fat Tartar.

"The powers," he explained, "are like snakes in the dark. They are moving against the feet of the Lord of the West and the East."

"That is Barka Khan." The Tartar nodded.

"They have poison in them, and they will strike him unless he slay them first."

Behind the *shaman* a rider reined in for a moment. Mardi Dobro did not turn his head; but he watched the horseman move away and, without waiting to hold out his bowl for payment, he got to his feet and followed.

The horseman passed slowly through the crowd, staring about him. He had the beak and eyes of a hawk, and his close clipped beard flamed red. Mardi Dobro laid a hand upon his stirrup.

"*Ai, tura,*" exclaimed the *shaman,* "O master, I have tidings for your nobility."

He spoke in Arabic, seeing that this stranger was a Christian from the lands of the Franks, and a merchant. Most merchants knew something of Arabic.

"*Y'allah,*" cried the horseman. "Go on. I have naught for thee!"

"But a woman! O master, I have seen such a girl—"

"I have naught for girls."

Mardi Dobro kept his grip upon the stirrup, shaking his great head reproachfully.

"Yet the woman is of the race of your nobility. She is in the caravan of Yashim the Bokharian. She is beautiful as a white, swift camel. Look!"

The stranger looked. He was, as Mardi Dobro had guessed, a merchant. He was also a rich man, owning four cargo ships and warehouses upon the Dark Sea,* being one of the astute Genoese who were gleaning fortunes out of the new Eastern trade. Although he traveled about alone and apparently without weapons, he had agents in every port and could summon an armed following with a word. The name of Messer Paolo Tron was known from Constantinople to Bagdad.

He did not need to ask what girl Mardi Dobro meant. Yashim's caravan occupied a courtyard behind a wall, which served to screen it from the eyes of common men on foot, while horsemen could look over it. In the shade of the far wall a rug had been spread and groups of unveiled girls sat in noisy talk under guard of a giant swordsman.

Tron uttered an exclamation of surprise and urged his horse through the open gate. He ran no risk in doing so, because these girls were certainly slaves, and as certainly placed here for sale, unveiled. One sat apart from the rest, and the sun struck upon the mass of her red-gold hair. Her drowsy eyes looked up at him curiously.

When he asked a brief question, she answered in a low, clear voice. For a moment he weighed the worth of her beauty in his mind, and then, as the swordsman came up, turned away.

"Eh," cried Mardi Dobro at the gate, "will your nobility not buy her away from that black dog, Yashim?"

"Nay," said Tron impatiently, "she is only a mountain girl, a barbarian. Why did you lie, saying that she was of my people?"

"Her hair is like yours. Such as she—these fair mountain women—are strong and faithful. She is worth a high price, and you may find a great profit in her."

"I buy no slaves." The Genoese rubbed his saddlehorn with a gloved hand thoughtfully. "Why did you say, at the fire, that enemies were rising against Barka Khan?"

Mardi Dobro held out his bowl, pointing to the sheep bone.

*Called the *Charnomar* by the Turks, and now known as the Black Sea. Tana, in the thirteenth century, the time of this story, was the chief port east of the Crimea. Its site was near present day Azof. Sarai was the great city of the Tartar Golden Horde, and it was still impressive in the time of Tamerlane. Little trace of it remains today, but it stood on the bank of the Volga north of the Caspian. The best caravan route—although hazardous in Winter—ran through it to the Far East.

"Eh, the fire itself spoke. By this sign—"

With a grunt of impatience Tron brushed the bowl aside with his foot and rode off.

"A MAN," the *shaman* muttered to himself, "who trusts his ears and not his eyes will come to a bad end."

But as he stood in the alley, bowl in hand, he used his own ears which were keen as a hound's. He was following a scent where a hunting dog could not follow it, through a multitude of men. Listening, he heard a babel of voices on the embankment—a babel of many tongues—and he made his way toward it.

His path was blocked by two men. One, with turban awry, stumbling at every other step, knelt at a command from the other, a Tartar soldier carrying a drawn saber. Before Mardi Dobro could pass, the Tartar placed himself behind the kneeling man and reached his free hand over the turban, catching two fingers in the other's nostrils. Then the soldier bent back the head without haste and thrust the curved edge of the saber across his victim's throat.

"Agh-a-a—"

A wild scream was choked off, and the Tartar executioner drew his sword free with a jerk, severing the backbone as he did so. He let the head fall, wiped his bloodied blade on the garments of the body and hastened toward the tumult. An execution mattered little, but brawling was forbidden by Barka Khan.

Together the soldier and Mardi Dobro came out on the embankment. At a table by a stairhead a Chinese secretary sat with his seals and record rolls. Around him had gathered a throng of interpreters and beggars. The Chinese officer, Mardi Dobro knew, was supposed to write down the names of all who came from the ships to the port, to list their occupations and destinations, whether they were Russian princes or negro slaves.

But the man who stood before the *bakshi*—the officer—was a strange figure. Half a head he rose above the crowd, with a brown camel's-hair cloak hanging from his wide shoulders. He wore neither hat nor turban, and his sun lightened hair fell to his shoulders. He leaned quietly on the top of a kite shaped shield, upon which was the battered semblance of a lion.

"He has no voice," cried the *bakshi* of the rolls. "He knows not Armenian or the speech of the U-luss.*"

And Mardi Dobro, who knew all the types of the caravan road, had never beheld one like this man without a voice. His darkened skin showed that he came from a hot country, yet his eyes were a clear blue. He bore himself like a man grown; but he was young, almost a boy.

"*Yah rafik,*" asked the *shaman* at a venture—for the cloak was of Arab work—"O man of the roads, art thou of the Arabs?"

"Nay," the youth answered at once.

"Was there ever," demanded the *bakshi,* irritated because the voiceless one had responded to another, "an Arab with hair like ripe wheat and a lion upon his shield? What is his name?"

"What name bearest thou?" the *shaman* asked in Arabic.

"Nial."

"Ni-al." The secretary wrote it down. "From what place is he? What lord follows he? Whither goeth he? And why?"

"Patience," muttered Mardi Dobro as he put the questions to the stranger. "Eh, *bakshi,* he says that he is from beyond the sea. He has no master and he goes to no place."

"*Cha!*" The Chinese flourished his reed pen angrily. "How can I write that in the book?" He turned to the Tartar soldier, who was eyeing the lion on the shield with curiosity. "Take thou the weapons from this wanderer from nowhere who serves no one."

Stretching out his arm, the burly Tartar caught the hilt of the stranger's sword and half drew it. Instantly the man named Nial swung up his clenched fist, striking the warrior where the throat meets the jawbone. The guard whirled and fell, his long skirted coat flapping about his boots.

The crowd stared in amazement. Few had seen the blow, and fewer still dreamed that a man's hand without a

*Russians

weapon could knock another down. The Tartar lay without moving, although he breathed heavily.

Clang! The *bakshi* struck hard upon a bronze basin hanging beside him, and other soldiers appeared, hastening toward him. Death was the punishment for attacking a Tartar with a weapon.

The crowd fell away from the man named Nial, who, feeling the menace in the air, raised the lion shield on his arm and drew his sword, a long straight blade of gray steel. But Mardi Dobro sprang in front of him.

"Move thou not," he commanded, "and say naught."

And as the guards ran up, the *shaman* thrust them back with his hands, shouting—

"O fools, would you cut down one who brings a gift to Barka Khan?"

The Chinese who had demanded the stranger's life cried angrily—

"Where is the gift?"

"Look at it," retorted Mardi Dobro, his green eyes glowing. "It is the sword in his hand. But touch it not."

Pressing nearer, they gazed at the long blade, observing that an inscription in gold was set in the gray steel. This was no common sword, and the man who held it faced them without fear or excitement.

"This," explained the *shaman*, who knew well how to work upon the feelings of a throng, "is indeed no ordinary sword. You all saw how when this man laid his hand upon it he fell senseless. It is a sword of power."

"*Kai!*" exclaimed the listeners. They all feared the power of magic, and who should know more of it than this sorcerer? Only the shrewd Chinese suspected that Mardi Dobro was trying to protect the wanderer.

"Why, then," objected the official, "does he wear it at his side, if it be truly a gift for the illustrious khan, our master?"

"Fool! If he did not keep it sheathed at his side, others might come to harm by it, as thou hast seen. Wilt thou stand in the way of one bearing a gift to Barka Khan?"

Slowly the official shook his head. He wrote down on his record that on the fourth day of the third moon of the Leopard one named Nial had come out of the Western Sea bringing with him a sword of power to be given to Barka Khan—all this upon the testimony of the Mongol sorcerer named Mardi Dobro.

"And see," he added grimly, "that the sword is given."

And he motioned to the guards to let the stranger pass into Tana. Promptly Mardi Dobro led his companion away from the crowd into the shadow of an alley. Here he thrust out his bowl, grimacing.

"Pay me, Lordling Ni-al. I saved thy head for thee. Pay now the worth of thy head."

Nial took from his leather girdle a small wallet and tossed it to the *shaman*, who untied it and examined the single gold byzant and the few silver coins within it.

"Is this all?"

"All." The stranger smiled. "I have no more."

"But thou hast friends who will lend to thee?"

"Not in this place."

Tying up the wallet and stowing it within his girdle, Mardi Dobro stared at the youth with insolent green eyes.

"Then why art thou here?"

"I heard that in the lands of the great khan a man may find service for his sword."

"*Ohai!*" Mardi Dobro grinned like a cat. "Thou—a Christian without even a horse, without gold or servants—seeketh service with the Lord of the World! Thou art a prince of fools. Go back to thy people. Find a ship sailing into the West and go!"

Again Nial smiled.

"My people are dead. I have set my foot upon this road. I will go on."

"The child rides a calf and cries for a horse." Mardi Dobro snapped lean fingers contemptuously. This boy had stood up to the Tartars foolishly, yet his sword was a good one. Perhaps it might please Barka Khan. And then there was the lion on the shield, the same rearing lion of the seal of Barka Khan. This might be an omen. "Thou canst not abide in Tana and live," he muttered. "There is a way for thee to go to Sarai, the city of Barka Khan. I

will set thy foot on the way, if thou wilt."

"Aye," said Nial.

Shaking his head, and motioning Nial to follow, the *shaman* made off through the crowded alleys, dodging horses and mules, until he came to the face of a stone building into which a string of laden camels was passing. He led Nial through the gate into a courtyard open to the sky. Here he pointed to the open gallery of the floor above them.

"At the head of the stair, in the fourth sleeping chamber, thou wilt find a Christian merchant who is as wise as thou art foolish. He goes to Sarai. Look to thyself!"

WHEN Nial turned to thank the *shaman,* he had disappeared among the kneeling camels. Climbing the stairs, the young swordsman counted the open compartments along the gallery and stopped. In these stalls slept the travelers who owned the beasts in the yard below. But at the fourth place loitered two bearded and shaggy men who glanced at him furtively and waited for him to pass. He had seen their like before, even to the long, curved knives they fingered restlessly.

"Go," he said to them quietly. "Go and rob in the alleys below."

They looked at his sword and the spread of his shoulders, then slipped away. Nial glanced into the compartment.

"Ha! What art thou?" a sharp voice challenged him.

Messer Paolo Tron sat at a small table before a steaming dish of rice and mutton, apparently heedless of the knifemen who had slunk off. A good carpet was spread on the floor, and the merchant's bed of quilts had been laid over several chests and bags at the rear.

"Nial O'Gordon am I," responded the wanderer, "without gear or gold in this land of paynims. Faith, it was a magician who got me through the port and told me I would find a Christian merchant here."

"What seek ye, Messer Nial?"

Tron spoke in the Norman French that was common to most of Europe. Secretly—although he carried a short falchion under his mantle and wore a shirt of linked mail under his jerkin—he was glad to have the loiterers driven away, but he did not show it. Instead his lips tightened at mention of gold.

"A bite to eat, a place to sleep and a way to Sarai, which is the city of the great khan."

Tron clapped his hands. A frightened Greek servant came to fetch another plate and glass for Nial. The two men helped themselves with their fingers and washed the food down with wine, in silence. The merchant was not given to idle talk, and Nial was hungry after weeks of being pent up in the galley.

"Now," Tron asked suddenly, "how is it that you speak like an Arab?"

"Easy to say." The boy smiled. "I was born among them. Aye, in a castle over the Jordan. My father and his father lived there, in the wars, but now they are dead."

A crusader's son, Tron thought. A luckless lad, raised in Palestine and driven out into the sea by victorious Moslems. He had met crusaders returning through all the ports of the Mediterranean in the ships of the Templars. They were all poor, seeking hire for their swords in a Christendom that cared not at all for them. Strange that this one should come to the road to the Far East.

"Better for you to abide in England. Have you no kin there?"

"Aye, so," Nial nodded. "One would have fed me, if I had tended his cattle. Another wanted me to carry cloth to the dyeing vat. I sold my horse and took ship."

Tron frowned. So it was with these younglings who had grown up in the wars. They would have naught of honest service at a trade, nor would they abide content within the four walls of a room. Probably this Nial would never forget that he had once ridden with his hawks along the heights of the Promised Land, or had watched for foemen to darken the sheen of a river at night.

"Here," he pointed out, "a man can do naught with a sword. The Tartars rule with a heavy hand, and they watch every shadow. Aye! The very horses are spies, carrying tales to them."

Nial bethought him of the quarrel at the customs.

"Still," he said, "a good blade serves well at times."

Slowly Tron shook his head. He was thinking that he had need of a man he could trust, a man whose courage would be like unbending steel. He would need such a man in Sarai. And here was this homeless Nial without other friends. Bold enough to meet the test, and young enough, Tron suspected, to be loyal to the man who gave him aid. At least, the merchant could make trial of him.

"I can give you service," he observed, "as far as Sarai, which is a caravan journey of three weeks. It will be your part to yield me armed protection at need and to go with me upon my ventures."

"That is fair," Nial assented, "and I will do it."

Tron pointed to the chests beside them.

"They have double locks of good Milanese work. But they hold only wine and gear and claptrap for gifts. If thieves get them, 'twill be small loss. Make a show of guarding them, but watch this other thing."

Rising, he looked up and down the gallery, then went back to thrust his hand among the quilts. He drew out a small sack of plain leather and untied the thong that bound it. After listening a moment he poured out into his hand a small stream of barley. Nial saw that in the barley lay loose jewels—tawny opals, blue turquoises inlaid with gold, and some small rubies.

"I am a jewel merchant," Tron explained, watching him, "and I mean to sell these at Sarai. They are worth a year's tithe of a great city."

Nial said nothing. He did not know what else the sack held, but the stones he had seen were not valuable in the Eastern market. Of course, Tron might have better stones hidden elsewhere.

"This sack," the merchant explained, tying it up again, "is your charge. Carry or keep it where you will."

"Aye, so," Nial assented.

In Christendom a merchant could keep his trove in locked chests. Here, upon the caravan road, a good pair of eyes and a ready sword were the only safeguard. If they were to travel together, Tron must needs trust him.

"Now," the merchant added, "abide here. I must look for horses to hire and a road follower to tend them. The Greek is too frightened to steal from me, but he is of no more value than a hare among wolves."

When he had gone, Nial replaced the sack in the quilts and lay down, wrapping himself in his cloak. As the light grew dim he dozed, half hearing the pad of passing feet and the voices in the courtyard below. The Greek came with a brazier to heat the chamber, and the smell of charcoal mingled with the stench of mud and wet sheepskins.

But Nial did not hear—because he came crouching, silent as a creeping cat—the man whose head was hidden under a white bearskin. Mardi Dobro squatted at the entrance of the stall, only his green eyes moving as he scanned every object, lingering upon the chests with their locks in full view.

DEEP in thought, Mardi Dobro left the house of the caravans. Although he peered into open doors and scanned the faces of passersby from habit, he paused at times to stare into the trodden snow and shake his shaggy head.

"*Kun bolkhu bagasan,*" he muttered once. "Does the foal show what the horse will be?"

Then—for the sorcerer had as great an appetite for meat as for silver, and the air had grown bitter cold—he felt the ache of hunger, and went swinging through the dusk toward the shop of Ku Yuan, who, being a man of Cathay, would have meat in the pot about that hour, and perhaps part of a tea brick boiled.

Ku Yuan's shop would have given pause to one who did not know it. A narrow door opened into dimness and smells unmentionable. A snarl and then a bird's scream greeted Mardi Dobro, and a long chain clashed as a black panther leaped from one end of it to the other. Livid eyes fastened upon him and blinked as he made his way familiarly through the caged beasts and the roped hawks sitting their wall perches. Ku Yuan kept a fine selection of hunting stock, leopards, cheetahs and falcons. The *shaman* smelled broiling mutton among the other odors, and

pushed past a screen to find an old Chinese squatting beside the hearth, dipping into a steaming pot.

In silence the *shaman* knelt beside his host and pulled part of a fat tail from the grease, seasoned with tea. He stuffed himself expertly, pausing only to belch, until he sat back and wiped his hands on a sleeping dog.

"It is true." Mardi Dobro nodded, while he filled his cheeks with lumps of mastic. "More and more Moslems come from the boats with arms."

Ku Yuan dipped a cup into the pot.

"They are like wolves gathering together. And they are taking the road to Sarai."

"What seek they?"

"What seek the wolves? I have warned thee."

The sorcerer thought for a moment in silence. He was a Mongol from the Gobi, and he served Barka Khan faithfully after his fashion. He knew that Barka Khan, the lord of the Golden Horde, was far to the south with his army. So there would be only a small garrison in Sarai, the khan's city. These Moslems were going there for no good. He had observed that Yashim, the slave merchant, had landed a few days ago with a boatload of White Sheep Turkomans—excellent fighters but no kind of guards for women slaves.

"What hath Shedda to say of Yashim?" he asked finally.

"I sold her to the Bokharian only four days ago. Am I able to change my shape like thee and go among the swords of Turkomans to ask what her ears have heard? Go thou! She may not find it easy to escape again to me."

Mardi Dobro grunted.

"Have I not listened with the ears of a ferret? The men of Islam know not that I understand their talk. Certain ones came from Sarai to sit down with Yashim and Ahmed the Persian, who hath an escort of cavalry. The ones from Sarai bade them make haste before the ice breaks up in the rivers. Others await them in Sarai."

Sipping his greasy tea, Ku Yuan closed his eyes indifferently.

"The camel men in the *serais* know as much," he said.

"Look upon this." The *shaman* drew from his girdle sack the white sheep's bone and laid it on his knee. "Today I took the omen of the fire and the bone. This sign is a strange sign. First appeared the mark of water, so large it must be the sea. Then—look upon it—the sign of a sword coming from out the sea. Then here is traced the sign of war."

"Aye," muttered the Chinese, "a sure omen, when thou knowest the armed men are coming in from the sea."

But when Mardi Dobro thrust the bone into his hand, he stared curiously at the network of cracks. No human hand could have traced them.

"But at the end," he whispered, "there is good."

"True." The *shaman* nodded. "Ignorant ones, knowing naught of the powers of high and unseen places, questioned me. I led them astray. But I went to search out the one who might be the bearer of a sword. For the sword is one, not many." He shook his head moodily. "First I beheld a merchant of the West, a man of authority. I followed him and led him to Shedda, so that she might see him. But then I beheld a young warrior with a sword drawn in his hand."

He replaced the bone in his pouch and crouched over the fire.

"A foal, a colt untried. Still, I watched over him. He hath a lion's head on his shield and he turns his feet toward Sarai. What if he be the one of the omen?"

Ku Yuan only smiled.

"I led him to the merchant so that he should be cared for. This merchant hath many great chests with locks."

The *shaman's* brow furrowed as he pondered. Without another word he departed, and the snarls of the beasts rose from the darkness as he passed.

WITHIN a half hour he was down on all fours upon the ground, a bearskin pulled over his shoulders. Patiently, moving a little at a time, he made his way across the wide enclosure in which Yashim had pitched camp.

Avoiding the tents of the Turkomans, he sought out the great round *yurt* with sides of white felt bound upon wicker work. After a glance over his shoulder,

he scratched gently on the felt.

After a moment slender fingers pried up the edge of the felt, and Mardi Dobro thrust through his hand, touching and recognizing a silver armlet that could only be upon the wrist of Shedda the Circassian, the spy of Barka Khan.

Even after that he whispered cautiously.

"What hath the peregrine falcon seen in the tents of Islam?"

"The Turkomans say there will be steel drawn in Sarai . . . Yashim keeps a rein upon his tongue . . . One boasted that more than twelve thousand Moslems are ready to arm themselves. The talk is of Barka Khan and the day when the ice will go out of the rivers. They will do nothing in Tana . . . I have need of gold."

"As ever!" Mardi Dobro checked a snarl. "Nay, thou—"

"Be still. Yashim pays little heed to us women, his head being full of other matters. His guards will look the other way for a gold piece, but they spit upon silver. Wilt thou say nay to the bearer of a falcon tablet of the khan?"

The *shaman* ceased to argue and felt cautiously in his girdle. He selected some coins and passed them under the felt to Shedda, who fingered them and gave them back swiftly.

"I said gold, not dog-dinars."

Pensively Mardi Dobro brought out three coins, smooth and heavy, and this time Shedda accepted them.

"Patience!" he muttered. "Nay, I have no more. Thy fingers would lift the horns from a bull. Now give heed. Thou hast seen the Farangi merchant with the red beard. He rides to Sarai as doth Yashim, with the next caravan. He hath with him only one swordsman, yet he bears heavy chests. He hath talked with Yashim, yet he buys no slaves. Do thou pry out what is in those chests, O nimble of fingers and wit!"

"*Akh!* Is that work for me?"

"On the book of the *bakshi* it is written that this Tron is a jewel merchant. Still he swears that he hath upon him only precious stones to the worth of a single horse. The chests are locked."

Crawling away from the *yurt*, Mardi Dobro gained the gate and stood up, chuckling to himself. After a glance at the stars to learn the hour, he retraced his way to Ku Yuan's house and found the Cathayan reading by an oil lamp.

"There is a letter," the *shaman* said, "to be written to the khan."

He himself could write prayers to sell to the ignorant. But a message to his master was another matter, calling for deft brushwork in the Mongol characters.

"By courier or pigeon?"

"By pigeon. It must go swiftly to the camp."

Ku Yuan brought out a small square of rice paper, a slender brush and a tablet of ink.

"To the Lord of the West and the East," the *shaman* dictated, "from the humble reader of omens at the sea gate of Tana, these tidings. The wolves of Islam are gathering in packs about his city of Sarai, and they will hunt before the breaking of the ice. Let the khan turn his eyes to the golden domes of his city. His men there are few, the wolves many. Now, Master Ku, let me see thee make thy mark below."

Mardi Dobro could not read the lines of Mongol characters, but he knew the Cathayan's mark. Satisfied on this point, the *shaman* snatched up the rice paper, folded it and rolled it into a tiny silver cylinder. He did not let the cylinder out of his hand until he had fastened it over the claw of a pigeon that he took from a cage bearing a special mark.

Going out into the darkness, he tossed the pigeon up and stood to watch it circle up against the sky. His keen eyes saw it rise and head to the south and west. Then he yawned and bethought him of sleep.

FOUR days later the great caravan from Tana to Sarai was on the road. They had halted for the night in the *serai* at the beginning of the desert that stretched as far as the rivers of Sarai.

Tron, Nial and the two followers had quartered their ponies in a corner of the enclosure. They bought hay for the beasts and brush and dried dung for a fire. The merchant, who knew the cold of the snow plain, had secured for Nial

and himself two *chabans*—long sheepskin coats, with hoods that could be drawn over their heads and sleeves that hung down to their knees. Wolfskin caps and boots of soft, greased leather kept them warm.

The walls sheltered them from the north wind. A score of fires like their own illumined the dark masses of camels kneeling by their loads, the lines of ponies crowded together, and the throngs of men: helmeted Tartar guards who watched, like the indifferent sentinels of purgatory, over the mingled cattle drivers, merchants and princely envoys seeking the road to Cathay; blue cloaked Iranis with towering turbans, shivering in the northern air; sallow Armenians gabbling in a tongue of their own; and the strutting bulk of pockmarked Yashim, the Bokharian slave dealer, who wore three coats and gave commands to a hundred wild Turkoman weapon men who served as guards for his women freight, and who had elbowed a Khotenese jade dealer out of the best place in the *serai*. Through this encampment moved Mardi Dobro in his red robe, alert as a dog.

After supper, while the Turkomans were noisily making the night prayer and the fires had died down to embers, Tron went over to talk with the Armenians, leaving Nial to watch the packs.

A half moon lighted the *serai*, and the swordsman retired to the angle of the wall, taking a sheepskin and the jewel sack with him. Here he could stretch out in the darkness and see all who passed in the haze of moonlight.

The Greek servant was snoring among the packs, wrapped up in a rug, and the guide had gone to gossip with friends. For a time Nial watched the bearded faces gathered about the dying fires. A figure would rise, now and then, and cough and come to the well near Nial to drink. Drawing the sheepskin over his legs, he turned over on his back, picking out among the stars the Flying Geese, with the Bear.

How long the figure had been bending over the packs he did not know. Raising himself on an elbow, he watched the prowler examining Tron's chests, and he heard the clink of metal thrust into a lock. The figure wore a hooded *chaban* like his own.

Taking his sheathed sword in one hand, Nial got to his knees and leaped forward silently. The figure in the white *chaban* started back, but Nial's free hand closed on the visitor's arm.

"Hai, thief!" he grunted.

A knife flickered under his eyes, and he bent his body aside swiftly as the blade ripped into the folds of his heavy coat. He did not loose his hold of the intruder and, before the knife could strike again, he swept the heavy hilt of his sword down on the other's wrist. With a sharp moan of pain his antagonist let the dagger fall.

Taking the other's wrists in his right hand—for the slender strength of the thief was no match for his own—Nial thrust the hood of the *chaban* back. He looked down upon a woman's heavy hair, bound by a silver band, and a young face, tensed in pain. Tears trickled from the closed eyes.

"*Yah bint,*" he cried softly. "O girl, what is this?"

From half closed lids her eyes searched his face. Nial was aware of the scent of jessamine oil. He had not seen her before, upon the road or in the *serai*, and certainly he had seen none so fair as she.

Instinctively he relaxed his grasp, knowing that he must be hurting her, although her heavy sleeve had broken the force of his blow. He wondered what she might be and whether she understood Arabic.

"Who art thou," he asked again, "to steal in a corner?"

This time she answered swiftly—

"Hush, thou!" And then, imploringly, "O my lord, master of swordsmen, I did not steal. Nay, I was looking only at the strange boxes."

"And their locks," said Nial, who had met other thieves upon other roads.

He set his foot upon the dagger, but he wondered again what girl of the steppes could have hair like that, and how she came to be loose, unveiled. Most of the travelers in the *serai* were Moslems, and even Yashim, the slave dealer, carried his women in camel hampers.

"Nothing is harmed, my lord," she whispered, "and it would shame me to

be dragged before the guards."

"What is thy name?"

She glanced from right to left.

"Shedda it is, and my lord hath hurt my arm."

Bending down, Nial pushed the sleeve back from her slender wrist, finding upon it a heavy band of silver. There was writing upon the silver of a kind unknown to him. As he peered at it the girl Shedda suddenly wrenched her arm free. Before he could seize her again she had darted among the piled up bales between the fires. He heard a low laugh in the shadows.

NIAL knew better than to try to follow; for a woman like Shedda would have men within call, and the men would have arms. And he had a mind to let her go. He picked up the dagger, and then remembered the jewel sack he had left in the corner.

Hastily he went and felt in the sheepskin. The sack with its barley and precious stones was gone.

Nial drew a long breath and silently cursed himself as he listened and heard only the steady snoring of the Greek. So the girl had tricked him, drawing him out of his covert while another, who must have known what to look for, had carried off the sack. But then, why had she struck at him with a knife? For he who drew steel in a *serai* must be ready for steel in return. Nial turned away and sought Tron among the blanketed traders.

"I have lost the sack, your sack," he said bluntly.

With a cry the Genoese sprang up and hastened back to their corner.

"Now tell me—" he whispered. "Ah, what in Satan's name?"

Upon the topmost pack of their baggage lay the leather sack, tied as usual. Tron snatched it up and thrust his hand within it. Then he shrugged his shoulders. The barley was there but every jewel had been taken out. He listened intently to Nial's account of the theft.

"Shedda!" he muttered. "Who moves like a panther and hath fire-red hair?"

"Red or gold."

"Yashim's slave." Tron remembered the courtyard in Tana. "A Circassian wench who will serve one man faithfully and draw blood or gold from all others. Eh, she led you about like a sheep. And this is your skill, to be plucked by caravan thieves."

"The fault is mine," Nial agreed quietly. "And if I can, I will make it good."

"A lordly pledge from a beggar."

"Yet," Nial added, "will I listen to no abuse."

The Genoese snarled, but put a rein upon his tongue and sought his sleeping furs. Both of them knew it would be useless to complain to the Tartar guards of the *serai* without witnesses to back their tale. A dagger gave no proof, and Shedda had not carried off the sack. To go to Yashim would be worse than useless. Only Tron knew the amount of his loss.

But within the week he discovered that the young swordsman, who had been tricked by a girl, could hold his own against men.

THEY were passing over a bare hollow, where a stagnant salt lake was bordered by white crustations, and the wind and the sun had swept the sand clear of snow. Red sandstone buttes towered over the hollow.

That day Tron's cavalcade was in company with the Armenians and the envoy from Persia. As all of them rode horses, they had drawn a little ahead of Yashim's *kafila* and the other laden camels, the horses making better going in the snow. A squad of ten Tartar warriors accompanied the envoy, who had, besides a score of his own followers, nobles and servants. From the rock pinnacles on their flank a cloud of horsemen swept down upon them without warning of any kind.

Yelling like demons of the wastes, the raiders raced toward the caravan track. They numbered several score, perhaps a hundred, and they carried lances with tufts of horsehair beneath the points. They bestrode shaggy ponies, and were so wrapped in dark skins and leather that they seemed to be animated beasts, tearing in for the kill.

In the caravan the Armenians huddled together like sheep, while the servants

shrieked in terror. Only the Tartars, who had been half asleep until then, acted in silence. Their squad came together at a single command. The riders drew bows from their hip cases, strung them and sent shaft after shaft whirring into the raiders.

Separating to escape the deadly arrows, the nomads drove at the ends of the caravan. Some Armenians, kneeling in helpless terror, were ridden down, lanced or clubbed, to writhe on the ground.

Tron, pale but calm enough, had urged his horse toward the Persian prince, while the envoy's escort snatched out their weapons, crying upon Allah. Nial had got his great shield on his arm and had drawn his sword, wishing heartily for a good charger between his knees instead of the hired pony.

"What devils are these?" he asked the Genoese.

"Tribesmen. Nogais raiding after the Winter—ha!"

The raiders plunged in among the Persian horsemen, stabbing with their light lances and hacking with short, curved swords. Horses wheeled and reared, as iron crashed upon leather shields and a man screamed.

Nial drove his pony into the mass of them. His shield was proof against the lance points, and his long sword slashed over the shorter sabers of the nomads. He turned slowly in a half circle, upon his shield side, checking the jumps of his startled pony and beating off the tribesmen who rushed him. They drew back before the steady lashing of his sword, and the Persian swordsmen formed around him.

"Ghar—ghar—ghar!"

The Nogais clamored like gulls, swooping about their prey. But their round leather shields broke under the weapons of the warriors of the caravan, and they had no heart for a hand-to-hand fight. When saddles began to empty they hung back, and the Tartar guards, who had cleared their end of the skirmish, sent a volley of arrows among them that tore through furs and leather like paper. The Nogais turned away, snarling.

Nial had watched them with steady eyes. He had marked a tall bay horse with a fine head. As they drew away he urged his pony forward, parried the slash of a saber, and came knee to knee with the rider of the bay horse. The man tried to shorten his lance, then reached instead for a knife.

They were too close together for a sword thrust, but Nial smashed the tribesman between the eyes with the pommel of his sword before the knife could touch him. The man reeled from the saddle. Nial caught the reins he let fall and turned swiftly to rejoin his friends of the caravan.

"Kai!" cried a Tartar who had watched him. "The boy hath taken a horse from his enemy. That was done like a man."

By the time Nial had mounted his new charger, the raiders had withdrawn beyond reach of the Tartar arrows. They hovered before the rocks, shouting and whipping up their courage for a fresh charge, when Yashim's *kafila* hastened up, attracted by the sound of fighting.

The Turkoman warriors raced their ponies forward to snatch spoil from whichever side might have had the worst of it. They turned upon the Nogais, who fled like wild dogs before a wolf pack. The men of the caravan sheathed their weapons and went to examine the wounded and claim the spoil upon the ground. Many came to look at Nial's prize, saying that it was a *kabarda,* a racing breed.

"Eh," said Paolo Tron, "you have skill with a sword, Messer Nial. We can get forty byzants for the horse in Sarai."

"Here—" Nial laughed— " 'tis better to have a horse than forty byzants."

Flushed with excitement, he examined the saddle, which had worn silver work upon the horn and the short shovel-stirrups. He did not heed Yashim's camels that paced past him with creaking loads, until a soft voice called to him:

"O lord of swordsmen, what need hast thou of a little dagger? Give it back, I pray. In the garden of Mahmoud the Blind, the horsedealer—" the camel had passed with its screened hamper—"in Sarai."

Nial recognized Shedda's voice. He had kept the dagger, a slender thing of pliant steel inlaid with a gold inscription, in his wallet. And she dared ask

for it!

"Nay," he called after the voice, "even an ass will not drink twice of bitter water."

PAOLO TRON had faced *serai* thieves and tribesmen with cool courage; but now, with only the open road ahead of him, he became ill at ease.

"In two days," he told Nial, "we shall be over the rivers, if the ice holds."

They were coming out of the barren land to a rolling plain where villages nestled in the hollows, and Tron decided to push ahead of the others. The road itself became crowded. Trains of fur laden sledges came in from the North, and immense herds of horses and cattle appeared out of the plain.

Once Tron's band had to draw aside when a high pitched shout echoed down the line of caravans. Nial saw a rider go past on a white horse, dark with sweat and mud. The man was plying his short whip as a racer does to keep up a horse's pace at the finish. He wore no furs or armor and carried no weapons.

His stooped body was bound tight in oiled leather, and bands covered his forehead and mouth, while silver bells chimed on his girdle. With a cry, "Make way", and a thudding of hoofs, he was gone.

"A courier of the khan," Tron explained, as they turned back into the road. "He can take the road from a prince."

"He comes from the great khan?"

"Messer Nial, little know you of what lies before you. The great khan, Kublai, hath his city at Kambalu in the far land of Cathay, which is a year's journey to the edge of the world. Ha, so! 'Tis under the very rising of the sun, and no man of Christendom hath seen it, or hath lived to tell of it again."

"Yet Sarai—"

"Is the city of Barka Khan. He rules the Golden Horde, which is here upon the threshold of the East. Aye, he is master from Christendom to the Roof of the World, where even the valleys lie above the cloud level. But content you, young warrior. For if your king of England were here in this land, he might serve Barka Khan as Master of the Herds, no more. For the Tartars who came out of Cathay have overthrown all that lay in their path. They have divided into different Hordes. But in Sarai Barka Khan hath stored the treasures stripped from a hundred palaces."

"What manner of man is he?"

Tron glanced about him and shook his head.

"Guard your words! Even in Sarai there will be men who know our speech. They are the spies of the Golden Horde. As for the khan, he is a man of great courage, who is ever with the army. For the present he is away, at war with the Il-khan in the south. Yet men say that Barka Khan often rides through his lands with his face hidden. He listens to the talk in *serais* and taverns, and marks down here a man to be slain, and there one to be tortured for information. So it is well to see much, and say little."

At the bank of the first river the merchant reined in and pointed. The dark road led across a two-mile wide sweep of glistening white. Ships drawn up for the Winter on the far shore looked like specks. A line of men and beasts threaded over the frozen breast of the great river, all going east.

"The first," Tron muttered. "Already, perhaps, the ice hath gone out of its mouth, down in the heart of the sands."

And Nial knew that when the ice broke there would be no crossing the mighty stream for weeks.

"Nay, lords," quoth a high voice behind them, "this is the second gate, where the wise turn back."

On a shaggy riding camel, Mardi Dobro grinned at them, perched sidewise on a roped quilt. And he leaned down to hold out an empty begging bowl to them.

"Away!" Tron snarled. "I will pay nothing."

"Look beyond the gate, O lord of nothing. The wolves are sitting on their haunches, the vultures are hovering in the air. I have eyes to see!"

In spite of himself Tron glanced around, and Mardi Dobro struck his camel, urging it past them.

"Ye may see nothing," he cried over his shoulder, "but they are there."

"A mad mountebank," the Genoese muttered.

The next day they crossed a second, smaller river. Climbing the eastern bank, Nial halted with an exclamation. The dark line of the road stretched straight to the east, between twin lakes. Far in the distance he made out a gray wall, dwarfed by the immense white wall of mountains behind it.

"The city of Sarai," Tron said, "and the palace of the Golden Horde."

Sarai had grown up around the *ordu* or camp of the Tartars fifty years before, when Juchi, the son of Genghis Khan, first conquered and then settled in the vast steppes between the Caspian Sea and the northern forests. The Tartars had made their headquarters in this spot between the lakes and within reach of the rivers; and the first huddle of sheds had spread out into wide streets, where Moslems and Kipchak Desert men had their quarters beside the shops of traders from Cathay and barbarian Alans from the mountains. Upon the height overlooking the lake the Tartar khans had built a walled-in palace, with gilded domes rising where the *yurt* summits had stood. These domes, and the wealth they contained, had given their name to the Golden Horde.

Tron did not wish to stay in the Moslem quarter; he selected a room in a small house kept by a Greek near the cemetery under the palace height. They stabled their horses in the courtyard shed, and when the chests had been carried into their chamber the Genoese shut the door and looked to see if the horn window was fast. Then he went to warm his hands over the smoking brazier.

"Messer Nial," he said slowly, "you have lost me my stock of jewels; and so you have sworn to make good the loss, and also to aid me in my venture."

"Aye, so."

"There is danger to be faced, and a great reward."

Nial looked up inquiringly from the handful of nuts he was cracking. And Tron made up his mind to speak openly. The young swordsman trusted him and could not betray him in any event.

"I have come to Sarai," he explained, "not to sell jewels but to get one. A single one that hath no equal, not even in the markets of Constantinople."

"Who has such a thing to sell?"

"I could not buy it." Tron's beard twitched in a smile. "Nor could any one. 'Tis an emerald, cut in the shape of a lion's head. I have seen it, and it would fill your open hand. Surely its weight must be over a hundred *piccoli*."

"An emerald?" Nial knew little of precious stones.

"Aye. Flawed perhaps, but still a stone unlike any other. It came from Ind where it was cut for an emperor. Then, in the wars, it was carried off to Bagdad, where it was kept in the treasury of the Caliphs. Barka Khan brought it away from the sack of Bagdad twenty years ago. They call it the Green Lion. That is why it may not be bought; and so I mean to take it."

As Nial was silent, he added:

"I know not what the Green Lion would fetch in the West. Only the emperor in Constantinople or the treasury of Rome could buy it. But meseems your profit would be not less than five thousand byzants of Venetian weight."

"A great sum," said Nial quietly. He understood now why Tron had not turned back after the theft of the jewel sack. Such stones were as kernels of corn beside this one.

"With it you could live as a man of gentle blood, with horses and followers and a *palazzo* in Genoa. Eh, you could buy yourself a delicate young woman slave with sound teeth and a sweet breath."

Nial smiled at the merchant's idea of luxury. And Tron, excited by his scheme, misinterpreted the smile.

"I know well what I say, Messer Nial. Two years ago I saw the Green Lion where it is kept in the Altyn-dar, the Gold House, or treasury of the Horde. At that time I judged its worth. A simple, swift venture, and the great jewel is in our hands, with no one to hold suspicion or make a hue and cry against us. 'Tis a sure game we will play. What say you, young sir?"

Cracking the nuts between his fingers, Nial answered without hesitation:

"It likes me not. Your ventures are your own, Messer Paolo, but I have not put my hand to theft yet."

NIAL'S grandsire had come out of Scotland upon the crusade and, although neither he nor his father had set eyes upon the land of their kin, the boy had been taught the strict code of clean knighthood. Raised as a lord's son in the castle among the Arab peasantry, Nial had never been allowed to forget this code. A crusader's word must stand, and he must back, at need, his word with his weapons. He must take the toll of hazard, and might keep what he could wrest openly from others, his enemies. But to steal would be to cheat his own inner sense of honor.

Tron eyed him warily.

"You have slain a man unknown to you to take his horse—aye, the bay charger which you cherish—yet you will not lift hand to carry off a treasure!"

"The one was fairly done." Nial frowned, stubbornly. He was not skilled in argument. "We were e'en beset by those pagan horsemen who outnumbered us."

"And here we be, two against two hundred thousand! Bethink you, my stripling. 'Tis no placid monastery here, where brother smiles on brother. Nor is it a garden of paradise, as many ignorant ones in the West have dreamed. Here the law is only one—the strong take, and the weak yield. This very Green Lion was reft from Ind by the Caliphs, and torn from them by the bloody hands of the khans. Would you say that was fairly done?"

"As to that," Nial responded gravely, "I know not. But to snatch a jewel is foul work, fit for a purse cutter."

"Is it indeed?" The Genoese rose to pace the chamber, with a quizzical smile. He was more certain than ever that Nial was the man he needed. "Think you a mump or scrag nipper could get even a sight of this Green Lion? Think you so? By all the bones upon every altar, I swear that only a warrior dare attempt it. And only a man with courage of steel can do the trick. Now hear how the thing lies."

Stooping, he peered into Nial's face.

"I trust you with this tiding. The Altyn-dar is a place of strong stone, without embrasures within reach of the ground, and with only one entrance. This gate and the walls and corridors are all guarded by picked Tartar soldiers, commanded by an *orkhon* of Barka Khan. The only others allowed within, upon a signed order of this *orkhon* or the khan, are rare souls who, like myself, may be called in to judge the worth of jewels, or to repair broken gold work. And they have always two guards within sight, one beside them, and one within the chamber. Moreover, they are searched to the very toenails when they go out."

Thoughtfully the merchant nodded.

"Perhaps a skilled thiever could find his way over the wall of the Altyn-dar—except that it is in the center of the Sarai itself, the palace enclosure where the Tartars are quartered and few others admitted. The Tartars can not be bribed, and I tell you truly that no thief could force a way in. Nothing has been stolen from the Altyn-dar. Nay, the only way in is the open entrance, without concealment."

"How?" asked Nial gravely.

"By a Tartar warrior, complete in every detail of his armor, and faultless in his bearing."

"But you have said they could not be bribed."

"True. And so my Tartar must needs be another, whom I can trust."

Nial laughed.

"I? Why, I know not a word of their talk."

"Words would not be needed, if this man bears a talisman."

"A *talsmin?*" Nial used the Arabic word. "A charm? Faith, have you got a cloak of invisibility?"

"Better than that." Eagerness shone in the close set eyes of the Genoese. "I have made ready something that will admit a Tartar without question. And once within, he would not be watched. He could go where he wished, and could pass out without being searched, carrying the great emerald under his coat. And who would know where to look for him after?"

Nial shook his head slowly.

"Granting that, it is still thieves' work. You must find another for your mask and your token."

"*Par Dex!* Can I find one to trust twice—first not to betray me, and then

not to make off with the Green Lion? I trust you, Messer Nial, and you will do this thing."

He stood over the younger man, tense with anxiety.

"I have aided you—aye, sheltered and brought you hither."

"And have I not done my part?"

"Nay, by God's head, you have not! For you swore to aid me in my venture."

Nial shook his head wearily.

"Not in such a venture."

"Will you deny that, when by your folly with that girl you lost my stock of jewels, you did swear to make good the loss if you could?"

Nial was silent, staring at the brazier. Tron's eyes fastened upon his troubled face.

"Will you recant your word? Then must I seek out another, and risk my life in doing so. For I will not draw back."

"What was the worth of the lost jewels?"

"What?" Tron shrugged indifferently. "Perhaps five thousand byzants, perhaps more."

"Then," Nial responded suddenly, his eyes blazing, "will I set my hand to this thing and do it. Upon one condition."

"How, then?"

"That my share in the theft will go to repay you for the loss of that cursed sack. Five thousand will pay you, and we will then be quitted of each other."

Tron nodded, closing his eyes to hide the triumph in them. The Green Lion would be his. For if Nial should fail, he knew of a way to get into the House of Gold himself. And, whether Nial brought the emerald to him, or he himself laid hand upon it, he need pay the boy nothing. The jewels he had lost in the *serai* had been almost worthless, merely carried for display, at need.

"Agreed!" he cried.

THE Genoese had made his preparations shrewdly and had bought, piece by piece, a Tartar's attire at Tana. From one of his packs he produced a pile of garments that he made Nial try on at once. Skilfully he aided the young swordsman to fit on tunic and breeches and horsehide boots, tying the girdle himself and hanging upon it a metal seal-box and horn paper case. Over Nial's wide shoulders he flung a long blue coat with wide sleeves and embroidered collar. Then over this he placed something like a kaftan—a stiff black covering that projected beyond the arms, with twin letterings in cloth of gold over both sides of the chest. Finally he added a *kalpak* of white felt, a hat with a leather drop behind that covered Nial's hair, and a long eagle feather. So attired, Nial looked inches taller, and Tron surveyed him complacently.

"Eh, he who wore it formerly was larger in the waist. The shoulders are right—aye, it will do."

Nial's dark skin and high cheekbones needed no artificial touch. And Tron knew that many of the Horde had gray or blue eyes. He was more concerned with the details of the uniform, explaining that it was the dress of a gur-khan, or commander of a thousand. He showed Nial a baton, or short staff of white bone.

"Is that your talisman?"

"Nay." Tron grinned until his beard bristled. "More than this is needed. But this is the baton of your rank. Wear it in the girdle, so."

"What is the talisman?"

Paolo Tron shrugged.

"When the time comes, you shall have it. With it, you could ride from here to Kambalu, with the best horses led forward for you, and every wish granted."

"Where is the sword?"

"You need none. A gur-khan—"

"Messer Paolo, say what you will. I will not set foot in this treasure house without a good blade at my side."

Tron's thin lips curled in a sneer.

" 'Twill serve you less than that baton. But I can get one in the bazaar. Then, too, you will need a new horse. It should be white, bearing a Tartar saddle. You have seen them. Good! I will give you thirty byzants, and five for the saddle."

And Nial reflected that the merchant had taken care not to have his own hand seen in this undertaking.

TO BE CONCLUDED

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

A FEW words from Harold Lamb on the subject of the Golden Horde. His two-part story of that title begins in this issue.

Piedmont, California

The Golden Horde existed, although little is to be found about it in the pages of history. The word "horde" by the way is from the Mongolian *orda*, and meant "encampment".

The *Altyn Juz* or *Altoun Orda*—the Golden Horde—was christened that because its first khan covered his pavilions with cloth-of-gold. The horde itself grew up around Juchi, the eldest son of Genghis Khan. After the death of the great conqueror his vast empire was divided into several portions, each the equal of an ordinary empire. But the structure proved too great to be governed by a single head.

In the time of the story, Kublai Khan ruled the eastern portion, Hulagu Khan the southwestern, two other men the twin central segments, while the Golden Horde formed the northwestern part, stretching over fifty degrees of longitude, from the Carpathians to Lake Balkash.

IT WAS the army of the Golden Horde that invaded Europe under Batu and the celebrated general, Subotai Noyon, in 1237, and almost exterminated Christendom. After that the ruling khans contented themselves with what might be called remote control. That is, they kept to the steppes of mid-Asia and exacted tribute from the west. At times they would raid Poland, Hungary or Bulgaria. They maintained a close grip upon the Russian princedoms, and the wealth in their hands became fabulous in extent.

Life in the open plains, seasoned by constant raiding, kept these nomads powerful and aggressive. They moved about in vast tribal camps, with tent covered carts towed by oxen, smoking kitchens on wagons, and even traveling mosques. They were accompanied by uncounted horse herds.

I once asked a Cossack of the Novocherkask region how many sheep his fathers had had. He laughed and answered that they never had been able to count the sheep, that they kept track of them by counting the sheep dogs. Judging by Marco Polo, the herds in the days of the great khans were larger than any thereafter.

ONLY the higher officers of the Golden Horde were Mongols. The rest were a conglomerate of the steppe peoples—Kipchaks, Kankalis, Kirghiz Kazaks, Bulgars, Alans, with a sprinkling of Gypsies, Armenians, and Venetian and Genoese traders.

At the time of my story the khans of the horde had moved into permanent quarters at Sarai on the Volga. Ibn Batuta says that it took

him half a day to ride through the city. And we know from the reports of Arab voyages that the khan had a large palace on a height surrounded by a wall with towers. Undoubtedly his treasure must have been kept here.

The actual site of Sarai is disputed by the Russian archeologists. Some say it was about seventy miles north of Astrakhan, while others place it close to Tsaritzin. There is very little trace remaining.

Owing to the fact that they kept to the steppes, and to their old habits, the rulers of the Golden Horde survived the downfall of the Mongols in China and in Persia. They were finally crushed by Tamerlane's invasion at the end of the fourteenth century. —HAROLD LAMB

A COMRADE gives us another sidelight or two on the Cattlemen's War in Wyoming:

Grosse Ile, Michigan

The February 1st issue of *Adventure* contained an inquiry about the Cattlemen's War in Wyoming, which came to a head in the 90's, with a letter in answer to it from William Wells, decidedly to the point and true to the facts. But the story of this Johnson County War, as the affair was called throughout the West, has never been adequately told, and ought to be, as in its importance in the history of the development of the West it was of more moment than the Lincoln County War of New Mexico, though the latter has received more attention because of the colorful personality—a pronounced blood-red—of one of the chief actors in it, the notorious Billy the Kid. Owen Wister's "Virginian," while a good tale, does not handle the matter adequately. I don't mean that it's biased or one-sided.

An angle of the whole matter that Mr. Wells does not mention is that some of the large cattle companies involved were English owned, and consequently had no interest whatever in the welfare of the West—only in profit. Nor does Mr. Wells make clear that these companies, through the corruption of the State legislature, got a bill put through whereby all mavericks found on the range became the property of the Cattlemen's Association. If a maverick belonging to a small rancher was found, it belonged to the Association. If a small rancher found a company owned maverick, why, that had to be turned in to the Association too. And the small ranchers were not members of the Association—membership fees were purposely too high for them to be able to join.

So a small rancher could become, according to law, a rustler merely when he found and branded a yearling which had escaped the round-up, which he knew belonged to him. And the big round-ups purposely neglected to brand calves belonging to small ranchers, and saw to it that they eventually became mavericks. Many a rustler was merely taking possession of his own, in the face of this iniquitous legislation. And many other actual rustlers, professed to be small ranchers, and sought, and got, the help of embittered settlers.

And here's an inquiry: Who knows anything definite about "Parson" Billy Williams? I've been on the trail of that old trail finder of the early West for twenty years, and discover very little. His connection with the tragic expedition of Fremont into the Sangre de Christos I know all about, from men living in Southern Colorado at the time. Only neither Fremont, nor accepted tradition, tell the truth about that—Williams really saved the expedition instead of leading it into trouble. I know that Williams was originally a Methodist or Baptist preacher, came from Louisiana to Taos about 1807, and had been to California and all over the mountain country long before Carson was ever heard of. I've written Stewart Edward White and J. Frank Dobie about all this, but they confess to less information than I have already. Here is one of the most interesting figures in American history, of more actual influence in the exploring of the West than any other, and nobody seems to know anything about him. Can't various old-timers, who each know a little, tell us what they know, until some sort of a connected story can be put together? —LEONARD K. SMITH

A BIBLIOGRAPHY of Triceratops, prehistoric hero of Paul Annixter's recent (December 1st) story in our pages:

Rock Springs, Wyoming

I read the story "There Were Giants in Those Days," by Paul Annixter, with decided interest and very little criticism (would have had no right to criticize, anyway) and, with Mr. A. Kenzie, noted the weight ascribed to the animal. That did not hurt the story in the least, for it might be a perfectly natural mistake, since the weight, even the bulk of the animal, is largely a matter of conjecture, the density of the musculature etc. being estimated from that of existing reptilia. Certainly the weight of the living animal could not be calculated from that of the fossilized bones. One standard text on Geology gives the weight to Triceratops as "more than *ten* tons." But in Annixter's reply to Mr. Kenzie's letter he remarks that "little has been written about Triceratops."

There is a book of some 296 pages, a monograph of the U. S. Geological Survey, Vol. XLIX, 1907, "The Cerotopsia" by John Bell Hatcher, based on preliminary studies by O. C. Marsh, edited and completed by Prof. R. S. Lull. Also a smaller and very interesting work, "Brachyceratops," Professional Paper No. 103 by C. W. Gilmore—1917, U. S. Geo. Sur., describing a much smaller and more primitive form of cerotopsian from the Two Medicine formation in Northern Montana, older than the Laramie beds of Converse County, Wyoming, which have yielded such an abundance of cerotopsian remains.

There are also many other publications by O. C. Marsh, Osborn, Brown, Matthews and others, many of which can be gotten from the Dept. of the Interior at Washington, so that the

bibliography of the cerotopsian reptiles is really quite extensive.

—H. ROE

ONCE again your attention is called to the Poppy sale campaign being conducted by the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion during Memorial Day week. As you know, the flowers are made by the veterans in Government hospitals and are sold only to provide funds for the support and amelioration of the lives of the men invalided in the war. Wear a poppy on Memorial Day!

ACCORDING to time honored custom, on the occasion of his first story in our pages, Perry Adams rises to make his bow to the members of the Camp-fire:

Malverne, Long Island

I was born somewhere between thirty and a hundred years ago in a place called North America. Early training prevents my being more specific, as I was brought up to shun publicity in all forms. Candor compels me to state that I have not had to exercise myself unduly because of it. I am told that I was a model youth—a model which all the mothers thereabouts warned their sons not to follow.

INSTEAD of going to Yale, for which I had prepared, I went into the coffee importing business in New York. I drank so much coffee that it kept me up nights, so after three years in the business I decided to go to Newcastle-on-Tyne, in England, to get more sleep. But I found that I had simply jumped from one extreme to the other, so I returned to New York and wrote a good many reams of what I termed fiction. As I was unable to induce any of the right people to believe that it *was* fiction, the undertaking did not prove financially profitable.

Through going abroad so much during my schooldays, and afterward, I had made a number of close friends in England. A good many of them were professional soldiers, who went to France in 1914. When the Lusitania went down, I decided to go and do something about it, because not only had a number of friends been killed in France, but the Lusitania carried down several more.

A FEW days before I sailed, a mutual friend introduced me to Oliver Madox Hueffer, a brother of the well-known Ford Madox Hueffer, or Ford Madox Ford, as he is now known. Oliver Hueffer was at that time a special correspondent of the New York *Sun* and had been in Mexico. He was in the British Army Reserve of Officers and had just been recalled to the colors.

Because I spoke French quite decently and could get by in German, Hueffer suggested that I might be of immediate help as an interpreter with the British forces. He kindly suggested that I sail on the same steamer and offered to pull strings at the British War Office, so that I might get an interpretership quickly; the job carried a commission with it.

SO Hueffer and I went to England, but when we got there we found that the interpreter business was out, since the War Office had passed a recent order that in future all interpreters should be drawn from the French forces. Since I could not hope to compete with the French at their own game, I was a little undecided as to my best course. While I was thinking things over, Hueffer was ordered to his regiment and I have never seen nor heard of him since. I certainly wish him well and I hope he came through.

Some of my friends offered to recommend me for a commission in a line regiment, but the period of training was quite long at that time (1915) and I feared the war might be over before I could get properly introduced. At last I joined up in the ranks of a London regiment in which I had many friends. We moved to Cambridge and were intensively trained for France.

IT WAS probably for this reason that we were sent to India. The British War Office has always been noted for a rare sense of humor! I think ours was the last transport, or about the last, to go to India through the Suez, because the Austrian submarines were getting altogether too clubby for comfort. Between Malta and Port Said, an Austrian sub suddenly came to the surface on our port beam; it cruised along beside us, for some hours. No damage was done, because it had run out of torpedoes. Our transport and the sub took a few pot-shots at each other, just for fun, before the sub sank out of sight. Permit me to say that this was not my idea of a good time.

For the next two years I was a member of the famous First Peshawar Division, Indian Army. This is a wonderful corps, in every way. In it, and in the Fourth Quetta Division, are assembled the very cream of the British Army in India and the Indian Army. These two divisions guard India's renowned Northwest Frontier, through which run the Khyber and Chaman Passes, and others, leading into Afghanistan. In this country one does not have to be especially gifted to be able to go out and be killed on any desired day of the week. Here life is checkered, but never dull.

FINALLY my regiment was kicked out of the First Division, because casualties and sickness had reduced our effective strength below the minimum demanded of a regiment in the First Division. Shortly thereafter I transferred to the Signal Service and almost at once was offered a commission in the Indian Army, which I accepted. My last two and a half years of service were as an officer in an Indian regiment.

In 1920 I got back to America, and since then have spent most of my time in the advertising

business, writing copy. This seems to have been more successful than my early attempts at fiction, because with these very eyes I have frequently seen the copy in national magazines. This has lead me to a fuller understanding of that fine old Peruvian saying: "If you can't get in the front door, try the back door!" —PERRY ADAMS

Erratum: The Houghton Mifflin Company are the publishers of William MacLeod Raine's recent *Adventure* serial, "The Broad Arrow," instead of Doubleday Doran, as stated here in the last issue.

A PARAFFIN method for mounting small snakes, as suggested by Davis Quinn, ornithology expert for Ask Adventure:

New York, New York

There was a recent question in Ask Adventure about mounting a snake to look lifelike. As the expert well indicated in his answer, this is a man-sized job if you intend to skin and "stuff" your snake. However, for small snakes up to a foot and a half, better results are usually obtained from a method of treating the specimen entire with liquid paraffin, as follows:

1. Anesthetize the animal with ether vapor or a 1% solution of chloretone or chloral hydrate.
2. With the following fixative, bathe the skin and inject the anus and the mouth:

alcohol 95% .....6 parts
acetic acid .....1 part
chloroform .....3 parts

Add sodium bicarbonate, 2 grams to 100 cc.

Any of numerous other fixatives may be used instead; for these consult literature on microscopical technique and preparation of zoological material, available at a public library.

3. Pose the animal and let it set or "harden" for several hours.
4. Wash in water and immerse for several hours each in alcohols of 35%, 50%, 70%, 95% (finally in absolute alcohol if possible).
5. Immerse several hours in xylol.
6. Immerse in paraffin of low melting point, at not more than 52° C. Higher temperatures will ruin your specimen. About twelve hours at least.
7. Plunge in cold water. This congeals paraffin quickly and prevents crystallization.
8. Remove excess surface paraffin with xylol.

If done carefully the natural form and color of the animal will be nicely and permanently preserved. The proper length of time for each step above is best learned by practice. This technique is now in use by the larger museums for mounting small snakes for exhibiton groups and also for frogs and salamanders; known as the paraffin infiltration process. —DAVIS QUINN

FURTHER information on gold in Guiana:

Oakland, California

In regard to a question by Mr. Mapes in the January 1st issue relating to gold in Guiana and with due recognition of the two answers which already have appeared in your magazine, would suggest that the party requiring the information write to Dr. A. A. Pulle, who was in charge of two Government expeditions to the Tumuc-Aumac mountains in Dutch Guiana, and who would be a source of first-hand and authentic information. This scientist and traveler was at one time my teacher in natural history and geology, and although I do not know his present address, a letter addressed in care of Aardrykskundig Genootschap (Royal Geographical Society) at Amsterdam, Holland, will be duly forwarded.

Gold has been produced in all three Guianas since 1884, and for the period from 1890 to 1901 the following production figures are given:

French Guiana, $40,000,000
Dutch Guiana, $6,000,000
British Guiana, $25,000,000.

Production in the Brazilian part of Guiana is reported as higher than in the French colony; and, according to latest developments, there is more activity in that part of Venezuela adjoining the British colony than anywhere else at the present time. The deposits are all placers and quartz, free milling, and operated on a small scale very much along the lines of early California mining. The Venezuelan river gold is found in the Territory of Yuruari, and according to Sievers the gold-bearing quartz is found in blocks imbedded in reddish earth saturated with iron oxide and underneath a layer of reddish humus. It might be well for prospective miners to find out whether or not it is permissable under present conditions to export the gold after they find it.

—J. H. ESSELINK

As announced in the last issue, the new and larger *Adventure* makes its appearance in June. With that number, the magazine becomes for the second time in its history a monthly publication, and will sell at 15c a copy.

As already explained, in the bigger magazine we are going to put out, we shall be able to find place once again for longer stories and novelettes, the absence of which so many of you regretted in the smaller edition. And we are returning to our old policy of running but one serial at a time, a preference also expressed by the majority of readers.

We think you are going to like the bigger *Adventure*.—A.A.P.

Ask Adventure

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

Dog

DON'T feed him at night and he'll be your alarm clock at sunrise.

Request:—"I am going on a prospecting trip in northern California. What type of dog do you believe would best serve as a watch dog—not one that will attack people or wild animals, but one that will not run away? A regular all-around, outdoor, one-man dog that will not require too much food or attention."

—GEORGE FREND, S. S. *California*

Reply, by Mr. John B. Thompson:—As you are going light prospecting, I suggest you take a little cocker spaniel along. Such a breed will stand the trip, be a good watch dog, and not be inclined to mix with other people or dogs. Price, young dog, about twenty-five dollars. Don't feed at night, and dog soon will learn to wake you up at sunrise. Keep dog tied when you leave camp until he learns to resent approach of strangers.

Shantyboat

YOU just float down. Coming back, you may have to borrow a mule.

Request:—"Can you tell us about what an average Mississippi shantyboat costs?

We do not expect to use an outboard motor. Neither do we want anything fancy. We are used to ranch bunks and to rolling in a blanket under a pine tree. We simply want something that will float without sinking. We expect to shove off from St. Louis. Do we need a great deal of special knowledge?"

—E. J. RICHARDS, Denver, Colorado

Reply, by Mr. Raymond S. Spears:—I shoved off at St. Louis in a 16-foot skiff, and crawled up the bank at Morgan City, Louisiana, seven months later. I slept in the $24.50 skiff under canvas stretched on hoops more than 3 months; I was in a $100 shantyboat—very old, rotten hull—awhile, and in a fine boat that cost $36.60 or so for the lumber, materials, and took a few days to build. And another boat was $70, I think. A shantyboat is like a horse; according to what you pay, the other fellow asks, and what you want it for, anyhow—to travel, to tie up, to go by outboard motor or just the current.

Supt. Public Documents, Washington, D. C., will send you catalog of reports about Mississippi River which'll give you a lot of slants on the size, quality and cussedness of the old scoundrel.

All you do is get a boat, shove off and wait for what is going to happen. Look out at Grand Tower you don't get into the Suck below the big rock there—a whirlpool. Keep over to the east side, halfway over, anyhow. Be doggoned suspicious of river rats, male and female, and don't hang up on sandbars on a falling river.

You can feel just like home in the bunkhouse, with a bunk on each side of the hull, and a cabin over you. Have a tight hull—no water in it—and a tight roof.

20 to 28 feet long, 7 or 8 feet wide, row with sweeps—long oars. Have good rope, a mudhook or anchor, and a woodburner to cook on, an ax to cut drift, and whatever you need to cook what you like to eat. If you get hungry enough, you learn to cook what you got, or rustle what you ain't got.

The boat'll cost at St. Louis anywhere from $50 to $200, and you'll be able to find something along there at Eads Bridge—just above, I think. Look things over first. Maybe you'll buy a skiff and drop down looking for what you want. It pays to be sure and have a good hull, and a cabin roof that doesn't leak. They paint some old wood to look real nice and new, but a knife blade will go into rotten wood under and above water real easy.

You just float down. The current carries you. If you see a steamboat coming, you row out of its way. You'll learn. The wind that is bad comes from south, around to the west. So you find a lee from winds from those directions, tying to banks

or anchoring in eddies. In a few days you know how to pull the oars, and you get over being seasick, nervous, and in about ten days you begin to be glad you came, and in three months you'll wonder why you never came before, and probably in six months you'll see the reason why you were born, brought up and maybe have shot two or three men who tried to pirate your outfit, or been shot by the same. That is part of the mystery of the river.

If you are clay lined you'll be happy. If not, you may be singing "Roll the Sod Over Me," and going back home on somebody else's mule, or one you got somehow according to your conscience. If you start light, and pick up according to your needs, you'll likely find it cheaper.

Tropical Forest

MILK from cow trees and water from wild pineapples.

Request:—"What are some of the South American trees from which drinks can be obtained while traveling in the forests?"

—EDUARDO SALAZAR, Canal Zone

Reply, by Mr. Wm. R. Barbour:—I have never had much success in getting water from trees. The coconut, of course, is a fine drink wherever found, and as pure as pure can be. In Paraguay I have drunk water from the base of wild pineapples, and elsewhere from "air plants" (bromeliads) growing on trees. Incidentally, the "milk" of the "cow tree" is a delusion and a snare, with very little nutritive value.

Gold

THE hardest worker will not pan three dollars a day in Oregon and Washington.

Request:—"1. Is it possible today, by dint of good hard work, to pan three to four dollars' worth of gold a day in some of the Washington and Oregon streams?

2. Do you believe that two hundred dollars would be enough capital?

3. Do you believe that an outfit which saw me through an Adirondack mountain Winter (average: 15° below) would do out there?"

—CHARLES H. HUESGEN, JR., Dobbs Ferry, N. Y.

Reply, by Mr. Frank Winch:—Right down to brass tacks—

1. I do not believe it will be possible to pan three or four dollars a day with the hardest kind of work.

2. To get where there would be even the remotest chance of working for gold, I would not venture the trip with a capital of two hundred dollars.

3. Northern weather seldom gets down to 15° below. But there are rains—plenty wet rains. I would say in general that any outfit used in the part of the Adirondacks that I have been in, north and east of Gloversville, would be O.K. for Oregon and Washington. Except here you will be more isolated. You will depend entirely on packhorses to get you in and out.

Both these States have been well worked over for gold. There are hundreds of mining claims that have been closed owing to the expense of getting the low grade ore out. I imagine that with the newer conditions as they are now, an effort will be made to reopen some of these operations, but that will require a large capital. If your age is right, and your health is right, and you want adventure, you will find both Oregon and Washington rugged in the extreme, with a fine class of people; and you will meet up with a number of prospectors working through the hills. If it is this kind of life you want, you will find your needs well filled.

Parachute Jumper

NOTHING in it except sprained ankles, now that a fellow has to pack his own chute and sometimes furnish his own plane.

Request:—"I intend to take up aviation, but first I must secure work. I would like to begin as a parachute jumper. What are the opportunities in this line, and what training and qualifications are necessary?"

—JOSEPH MICHAELS, New Hampton, New York

Reply, by Lieut. J. R. Starks:—To land a job as a parachute jumper you must know how to pack and maintain your chute. Gone are the days when a jumper could get from $25 to $50 per jump and have his chute packed by some one else. Jumpers now get from $5 to $10 a jump; in fact, there are any number of experienced jumpers who will clamor for the chance at $5—or for $10 and furnish the chute. That is, some one furnishes you the chute and you get 5 bucks, or you furnish the chute and get 10, and maybe have to furnish the pilot and airplane from which you jump, in addition to furnishing the chute. Then there is the job of repacking the parachute.

Parachutes now cost about $300, so you can see that there isn't much to the job of parachute jumping except sprained ankles.

However, if you first want to learn the job of parachute rigging, send to the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C., for Training Manual No. 2170-72, "The Parachute Rigger." It costs 5 cents per copy. Also send to the Aeronautics Branch, Dept. of Commerce, for Air Commerce Regulations and the Parachute Supplement to those regulations. Sent free upon request.

That will give you some idea of what the job of parachute rigger is. If you really want to learn the job, look in any of the larger aero magazines, like *Aero Digest, Popular Aviation,* etc., and see the ads of those schools which teach parachute rigging (not by mail order, but real mechanics schools).

After that, well, I know of no opening for the job of parachute jumping. The market is glutted with lads who have made scores of live jumps and will do 'em again at 5 bucks apiece. Carnival committees, aero meets, etc., hesitate to engage an inexperienced jumper due to the likelihood of accident and the possibility of lawsuits arising from such accidents. In "the good old days" of

1927-1929 when there was a demand for that sort of stuff a lot of youngsters got their experience. They are the ones who get the jobs now.

Storms

AUSTRALIAN willy-willies, and other meteorological data from "down under".

Request:—"I may go on a cruise to Australia in the near future, and I would be grateful for data on the storm seasons in Australian waters. I have heard that sailing conditions are ideal."

—MILTON R. HOGATE, Salem, New Jersey

Reply, by Mr. Alan Foley:—Within certain well defined limits you can take it that the waters surrounding Australia are friendly. During the Winter months—May-September—the southern shores are subject to cyclonic storms, evolved from the V-shaped depressions of the southern low-pressure belt.

The northeast coast of Queensland—from January to April—is occasionally visited by hurricanes from the northeast tropics. Only a small percentage of these reach Australia, however, as they usually recurve in their path to the east of New Caledonia.

Very severe cyclones, locally known as "willy-willies", are peculiar to the northwest coast of West Australia. I hope I am not with you when you bump one of these. They take heavy toll of the pearling luggers—even though the latter avoid the worst by tying up for awhile during the regular "willy-willy" season. November to April is the period when these may be experienced. February-March, I believe, are the worst months. It will give you some idea of the severity of these storms when I tell you that some of the houses fronting the seaboard that get the full force of them are literally anchored to the ground by passing heavy chains over the roofs and wedging them into the ground. This is a common device.

The above gives you the storm months in the various latitudes. At other times the weather is mostly placid, with occasional heavy squalls that are not commonly considered dangerous to the smaller type of craft.

Snowshoe

CARIBOU lacings can not be improved upon.

Request:—"What is the babiche used for webbing in snowshoes made of? Would it be advisable to use beef hide? Is it put on wet and then allowed to dry?"

—TED THOMPSON, Wishon, California

Reply, by Mr. W. H. Price:—The best snowshoes are made of caribou lacings. The fine mesh bearpaw models made by the Indians can not be improved upon. The caribou hide is cut up in narrow strips, put on wet, so that when it dries it is good and tight. I do not think beef hide would be very satisfactory. It is very seldom, if ever, used for making snowshoes.

Wrestler

BROWN bread, lean meat and lots of salad; no liquor or tobacco.

Request:—"I shall appreciate it very much if you will give me a few pointers as to the diet of a wrestler."

—C. L. CONFER, San Pedro, California

Reply, by Mr. Charles B. Cranford:—The amateur wrestler must remember two main things in dieting: Never overeat, but eat plenty of good wholesome food. Do not eat between meals. Keep away from sweets as much as possible. Do not drink alcoholic or carbonated beverages. Wait at least two hours after a meal before exercising.

Eat plenty of fresh vegetables and fruits. At least once a day these things, plus a salad, should appear on your menu. Milk (Grade A), cocoa and water are the best beverages. Brown bread is more beneficial than white; while toasted bread is the best of all. Lean meats, such as lamb chops and fish, are the best types of meat for a wrestler's diet. Cereals are very important in the breakfast diet, especially those containing wheat.

These rules are general, but if followed will keep you in good shape.

Don't neglect your rest, and exercise in fresh air and sunlight.

Deerskin

BRITTLE hair. Impractical for use as a rug.

Request:—"Last Fall I shot a beautiful big buck deer. I have the skin, and would like to know whether it would be practical, after tanning with the hair left on it, to use it as a rug."

—HAROLD R. HOFF, Duluth, Minnesota

Reply, by Mr. Seth W. Bullock:—Let me suggest that you hang it on the wall instead of using it on the floor. The reason for this is that deerskins make very poor rugs, due to the fact that the hair is brittle, and it will be only a short time before use will break the hairs and leave ugly bare spots on the hide. It would be better hung up for a decoration. Then the looks will not be impaired.

Marine Corps

RECRUITING offices are temporarily closed.

Request:—"I would like some information about enlisting in the U. S. Marine Corps. I am positive I could pass all the requirements."

—GLENN DEE STROUP, Arlington, Kansas

Reply, by Capt. F. W. Hopkins:—Recruiting offices of the Marine Corps have been closed and no applicants for enlistment can be accepted. This is due to very drastic cuts in the strength of the organization and severe cuts in the appropriations. I doubt if there will be any opening for some time.

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelop and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to this magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The expert will in all cases answer to the best of his ability, but neither he nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment. Ask Adventure covers outdoor opportunities, but only in the way of general advice.

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

Small Boating *Skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake cruising.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Canoeing *Paddling, sailing, cruising; regattas.*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 536 S. Clark St., Chicago, Illinois.

Motor Boating GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M. D., care American Tourist Camp Assn., 152 West 65th St., New York City.

Yachting A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Place, Chicago, Ill.

Motor Vehicles *Operation, legislative restrictions and traffic.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

Automotive and Aircraft Engines *Design, operation and maintenance.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

All Shotguns, *including foreign and American makes; wing shooting.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

All Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers, *foreign and American.*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Box 69, Salem, Ore.

Edged Weapons, *pole arms and armor.*—CAPT. ROBERT E. GARDNER, 17 E. Seventh Ave., Columbus, Ohio.

First Aid CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 322, Westfield, New Jersey.

Hiking and Health-Building Outdoors CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 322, Westfield, New Jersey.

Camping and Woodcraft PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tennessee.

Mining and Prospecting *Territory anywhere in North America. Mining law, prospecting, outfitting; any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic.*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Precious and Semi-precious Stones *Cutting and polishing of gem materials; technical information.*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 210 Post St., San Francisco, Cal.

Forestry in the United States *Big-Game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States.*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry *Tropical forests and products. No questions on employment.*—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care of Insular Forester, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Army Matters, United States and Foreign CAPTAIN GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ripon, Wisconsin.

Navy Matters *Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery. Maritime law.*—LIEUT. FRANCIS V. GREENE, U. S. N. R. (Retired), 442 Forty-ninth St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

U. S. Marine Corps CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, 128 S. Edinburgh Ave., Los Angeles, Cal.

Aviation *Airplanes; airships; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; laws; licenses; operating data schools; foreign activities; publications. Parachutes and gliders. No questions on stock promotion.*—LIEUTENANT JEFFREY R. STARKS, 1408 "N" Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

State Police FRANCIS H. BENT, Box 176, Farmingdale, N. J.

Federal Investigative Activities *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, Box 176, Farmingdale, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, 189-16 Thirty-seventh Avenue, Flushing, New York.

Horses *Care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting, jumping, and polo; horses of the old and new West.*—THOMAS H. DAMERON, 1709 Berkley Ave., Pueblo, Colo.

Dogs JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal *Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Cal.

Taxidermy SETH BULLOCK, care *Adventure.*

Entomology *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects, etc.*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Herpetology *General information on reptiles and amphibians; their habits and distribution.*—KARL P. SCHMIDT, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois.

Ornithology *Birds; their habits and distribution.*—DAVIS QUINN, 3548 Tryon Ave., Bronx, New York, N. Y.

Stamps DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

Radio *Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Photography *Information on outfitting and on work in out-of-the-way places. General information.*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, New Jersey.

Football JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose Street, New York City.

Baseball FREDERICK LIEB, *The New York Evening Post,* 75 West St., New York City.

Track JACKSON SCHOLZ, P. O. Box 163, Jenkintown, Pa.

Swimming LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

Skiing and Snowshoeing W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Archery EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Wrestling CHARLES B. CRANFORD, 35 E. 22nd St., New York City.

Boxing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH.

Fencing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, New York Athletic Club, Central Park South, New York City.

The Sea Part 1 *American Waters.* Also ships, seamen, wages, duties, statistics and records of American shipping. Vessels lost, abandoned, sold to aliens and all government owned vessels.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 47 Dick St., Rosemont, Alexandria, Va.

★The Sea Part 2 *British Waters.* Also old-time sailoring.—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

★The Sea Part 3 *Atlantic and Indian Oceans: Cape Horn and Magellan Straits; Islands and Coasts.* (See also West Indian Sections.) *The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.*—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

Philippine Islands BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Arizona, care of Conner Field.

★**New Guinea** L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa** TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania** ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge Street, Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands** WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardross," Suva, Fiji.

Asia Part 1 *Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan.*—GORDON MACCREAGH, Box 197, Centerport, Long Island, N. Y.

Asia Part 2 *Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies in general, India, Kashmir, Nepal. No questions on employment.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care *Adventure*.

Asia Part 3 *Anam, Laos, Cambodia, Tongking, Cochin-China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure*.

★**Asia Part 4** *Southern and Eastern China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure*.

★**Asia Part 6** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., U. S. Veterans' Hospital, Fort Snelling, Minn.

Asia Part 7 *Japan.*—OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntington Ave., Scarsdale, New York.

Asia Part 8 *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*.

★**Africa Part 1** *Egypt, Tunis, Algeria.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure*.

Africa Part 2 *Abyssinia, French Somaliland, Belgian Congo. No questions on employment.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care of *Adventure*.

Africa Part 3 (British) *Sudan, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya. No questions on employment.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care of *Adventure*.

Africa Part 4 *Tripoli. Including the Sahara, Tuaregs, caravan trade and caravan routes.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*.

Africa Part 5 *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure*.

Africa Part 6 *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar: West Africa: Southern and Northern Nigeria.*—N. E. NELSON, Firestone Plantations Company, Akron, Ohio.

Africa Part 7 *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal and Rhodesia.*—CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Camp, Box 107, Santa Susana, Cal.

✠**Africa Part 8** *Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada.

Madagascar RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

Europe G. I. COLBRON, East Ave., New Canaan, Conn.

South America Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*.

South America Part 2 *Venezuela, the Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil.*—DR. PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 457 W. 123rd St., New York, N. Y.

✠**West Indies** *Cuba, Isle of Pines, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups.*—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Central America *Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala.*—E. BRUGUIERE, 438 W. 20th St., New York City.

Mexico Part 1 *Northern Border States of Old Mexico, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamanulipas.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Mexico Part 2 *Southeastern Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and States of Yucatan and Campeche.* Also archeology.—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Park, Md.

✠**Mexico Part 3** *Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—JOHN NEWMAN PAGE, Sureno Carranza 16, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

Newfoundland C. T. JAMES, Box 1331, St. Johns, Newfoundland.

Greenland Also dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Canada Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.* Also fur farming.—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, New York.

✠**Canada Part 2** *Southeastern Quebec.*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 24 Plessis St., Quebec, Canada.

✠**Canada Part 3** *Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungova and Keewatin.* Big game, fishing, canoeing, Northland travel, also H. B. Company Posts, Indian tribes.—S. E. SANGSTER, 27 Plymouth Ave., Ottawa, Ont., Canada.

✠**Canada Part 4** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, *The Chronical*, Arnprior, Ont., Canada.

✠**Canada Part 5** *Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario.* Also national parks.—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 269 Victoria Road, Walkerville, Ont., Canada.

Canada Part 6 *Humers Island and English River District.*—T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn.

✠**Canada Part 7** *Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C.

Canada Part 8 *The Northw. Ter. and the Arctic, especially Ellesmere Land, Baffinland, Melville and North Devon Islands, North Greenland and the half-explored islands west of Elles, mere.*—PATRICK LEE, 189-16 Thirty-seventh Avenue, Flushing, New York.

✠**Canada Part 9** *Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin and Hudson Bay mineral belt.*—LIONEL H. G. MOORE, Flin Flon, Manitoba, Canada.

Alaska Also mountain climbing. THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 922 Centinela Blvd., Inglewood, Cal.

Western U. S. Part 2 *New Mexico.* Also Indians. Indian dances, including the snake dance.—H. F. ROBINSON, 1211 West Roma Ave., Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Western U. S. Part 3 *Colorado and Wyoming.* Homesteading. Sheep and Cattle Raising.—WILLIAM WELLS, Sisters, Oregon.

Western U. S. Part 4 *Nevada, Montana and the Northern Rocky Mountains.*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nevada.

Western U. S. Part 5 *Idaho and Surrounding Country.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Western U. S. Part 6 *Tex. and Okla.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Western U. S. Part 7 *Oregon and Washington.*—FRANK WINCH, 405 N. Spaulding Ave., Los Angeles, Cal.

Middle Western U. S. Part 1 *The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.*—JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*.

Middle Western U. S. Part 2 *Missouri and Arkansas. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Especially wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure*.

Middle Western U. S. Part 3 *Ind., Ill., Mich., Miss., and Lake Michigan.* Also claiming, natural history legends.—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure*.

Middle Western U. S. Part 4 *Mississippi River.* Routes, connections, itineraries; river-steamer and power boat travel; idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries.—GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa.

Middle Western U. S. Part 5 *Lower Mississippi River (St. Louis down), Atchalaya across La. swamps. St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottom.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Middle Western U. S. Part 6 *Great Lakes.* Also courses, distances, reefs and shoal lights, landmarks, charts, laws, penalties, river navigation.—H. C. GARDNER, 1863 E. 57th St., Cleveland, Ohio.

Eastern U. S. Part 1 *Eastern Maine. All territory east of Penobscot River.*—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me.

Eastern U. S. Part 2 *Western Maine. For all territory west of the Penobscot River.*—DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me.

Eastern U. S. Part 3 *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I. and Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 1332, New Haven, Conn.

Eastern U. S. Part 4 *Adirondacks, New York.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Eastern U. S. Part 5 *Maryland, District of Columbia, West Virginia.* Also historical places.—LAURENCE EDMUND ALLEN, 307 Aracoma Apts., Charleston, West Virginia.

Eastern U. S. Part 6 *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard.* Also sawmilling.—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure*.

Eastern U. S. Part 7 *The Great Smokies and the Appalachian Mountains South of Virginia.*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

★(*Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

✠(*Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

THE TRAIL AHEAD—THE NEXT ISSUE OF *ADVENTURE*—JUNE

Honors of War

By MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON

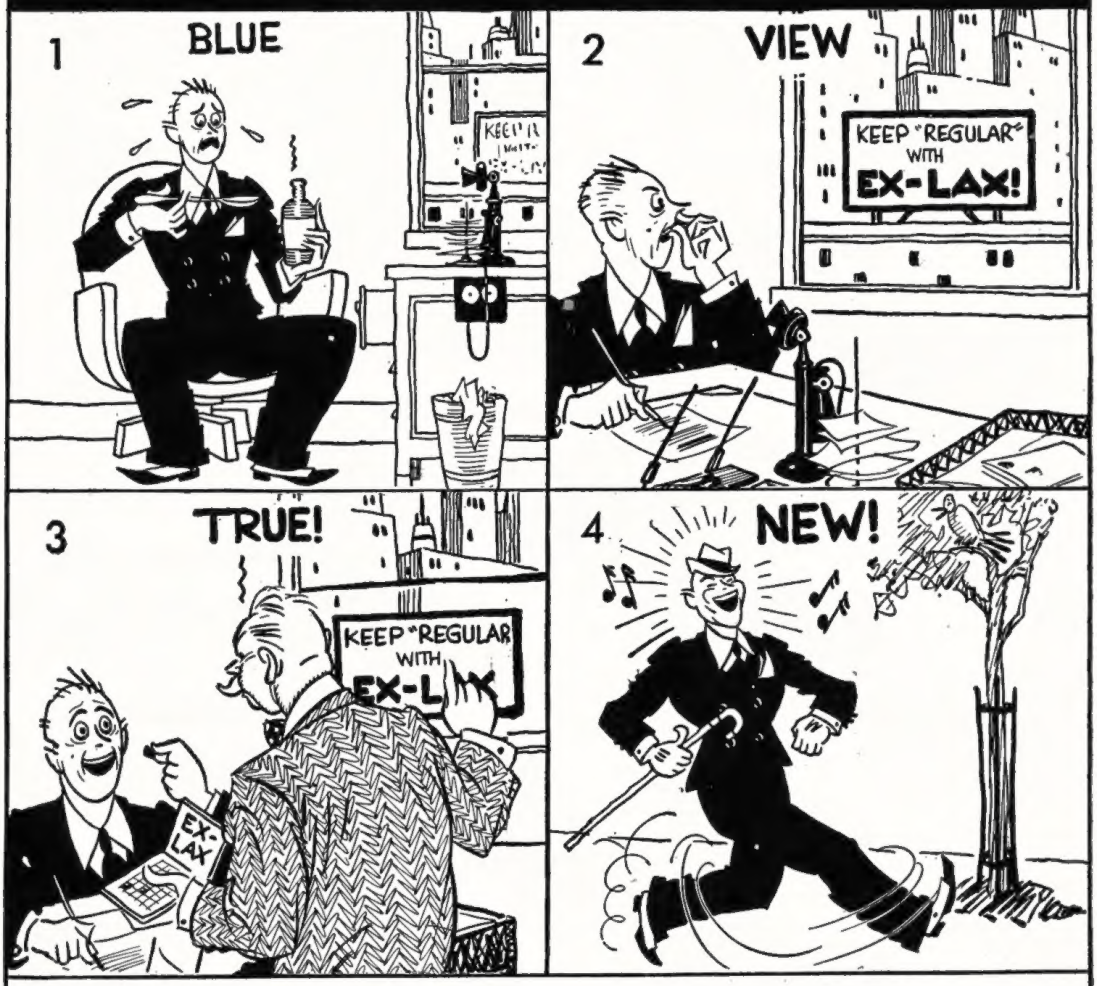
A gripping novelette of the Cossacks and the U. S. Cavalry in war-torn Siberia after the Red revolution.

And These Other Fine Stories

THE IVORY KILLERS, a story of ivory poaching in East Africa, by GORDON MACCREAGH; THE GOLDEN HORDE, conclusion of a two-part story of a Crusader's son among the Mongol conquerors of Asia, by HAROLD LAMB; THE LAST MAGICIAN, a story of a trick that baffled a master conjuror, by JOHN D. SWAIN; HOME GUARD, a story of courage and the railroad men, by WILLIAM EDWARD HAYES; HURRICANE SHIP, a story of the deepwater sailors, by RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS; THE STRANGER FROM BOSTON, a story of crime and detection, by REECE HAGUE; and PART III of RIFLED GOLD, a mystery novel, with HASHKNIFE HARTLEY, by W. C. TUTTLE.

"REGULAR" FOLKS

BY JEFFERSON MACHAMER



YOU'LL feel like a "new" man in the morning if you take an Ex-Lax or two tonight. And you'll never go back to nasty-tasting laxatives after that.

For Ex-Lax tastes just like delicious chocolate! Yet it is so safe, so mild, so scientific—so effective for every age—that—when Nature forgets—remember Ex-Lax.

Get Ex-Lax today, at any drug store—in 10c and 25c sizes. Or if you wish a free sample, write to Ex-Lax, Inc., Dept. Y53, Box 170, Times Plaza Station, Brooklyn, New York.

KEEP "REGULAR" WITH

EX-LAX

THE CHOCOLATED LAXATIVE

Of thee I sing
JOHN LAGATTA
LUCKY STRIKE
"IT'S TOASTED"
CIGARETTES
"It's toasted"